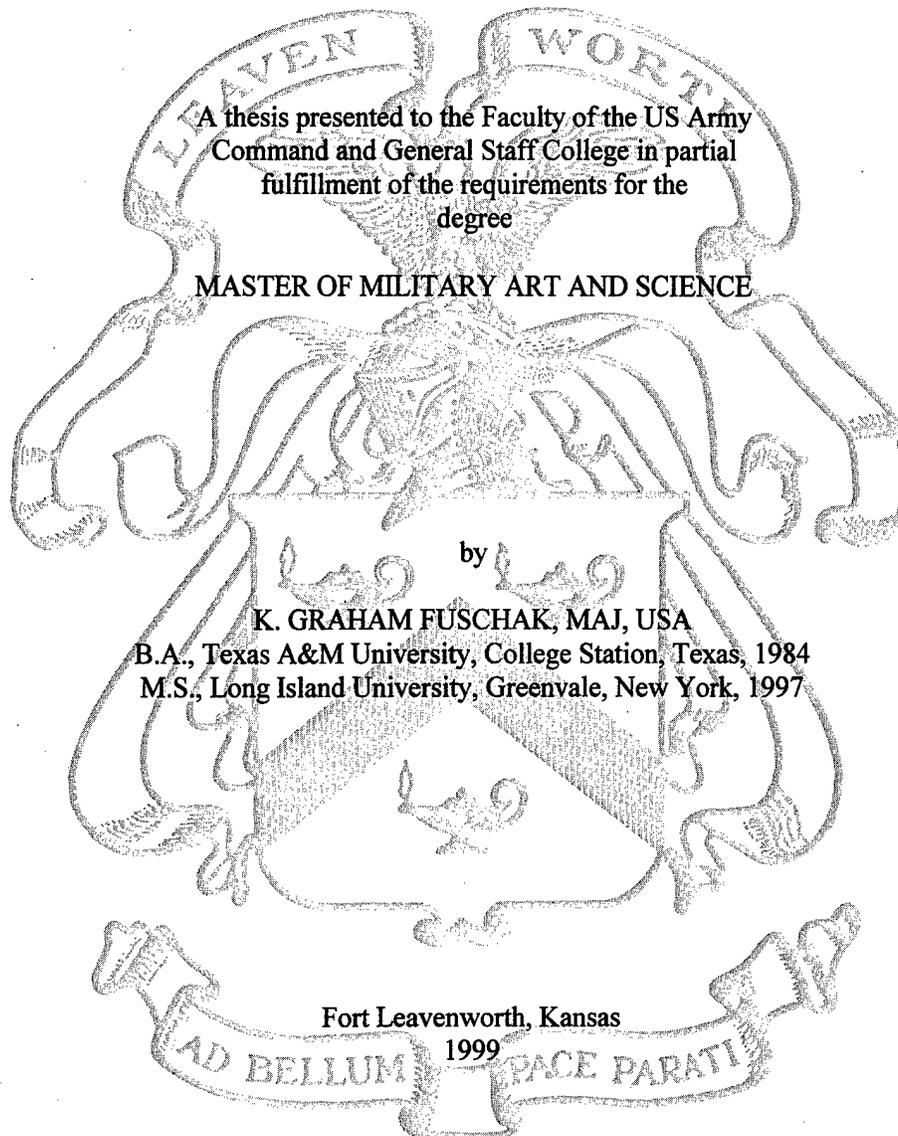


THE 43RD INFANTRY DIVISION:  
UNIT COHESION AND NEUROPSYCHIATRIC CASUALTIES



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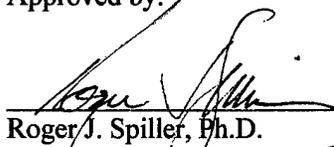
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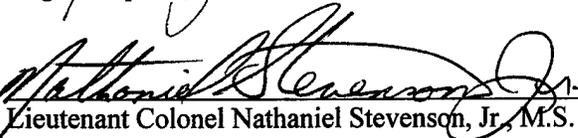
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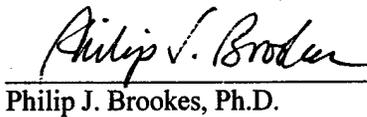
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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the US Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

THE 43rd INFANTRY DIVISION: UNIT COHESION AND NEUROPSYCHIATRIC CASUALTIES by MAJ K. Graham Fuschak, USA, 145 pages.

This study investigates unit cohesion as it relates to neuropsychiatric casualties in the 43rd Infantry Division in World War II. The 43rd was a National Guard Division federalized in 1941 and sent to the South Pacific, where it sustained over 15 percent neuropsychiatric casualties in its first action on New Georgia Island, The Solomon Islands, from July to September 1943.

The study explores the multiple causes of these casualties, to include ignorance of lessons learned regarding neuropsychiatric casualties in World War I, general unpreparedness, poor training, and inexperienced leadership. The study emphasizes the importance of knowledge of the enemy and of basic military psychology in developing units capable of performing well under the stress of combat. Lacking in cohesion, the 43rd was susceptible to the large number of neuropsychiatric casualties it sustained.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Any study of history is a journey into a foggy and brooding world unwilling to surrender its secrets. More difficult still is a journey into the minds of soldiers. Their actions in combat and their memories are not ruled by the laws of cause and effect. They speak to us from out of body experiences, from chaos, from an obscenely unfamiliar country. If General Sherman is correct, and war is indeed Hell, then soldiers speak to us from Hell.

My Charon on the journey to Hell has been Dr. Roger J. Spiller, George C. Marshall Professor of Military History, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. The only coin he asked for my passage was an understanding that warfare is the business of individual men, not machines or systems. In return he provided a true course and counsel born of long experience and deep reflection. The journey would have been impossible without him.

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And finally, to those men who died getting the job done: I believe, ironically, that one of the many Japanese words for thank you, *sumimasen*, is the most appropriate word. It implies that I have received something that I cannot repay.

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I found him in the guard-room at the Base.  
From the blind darkness I had heard his crying  
And blundered in. With puzzled, patient face  
A sergeant watched him; it was no good trying  
To stop it; for he howled and beat his chest.  
And, all because his brother had gone west,  
Raved at the bleeding war; his rampant grief  
Moaned, shouted, sobbed, and choked, while he was  
    kneeling  
Half naked on the floor. In my belief  
Such men have lost all patriotic feeling.

Siegfried Sassoon  
*Lamentations*

CHAPTER 1  
INTRODUCTION

Two American soldiers in a foxhole, New Georgia Island, the Solomons, July 1943. Night is coming on fast, another night of Japanese soldiers infiltrating the lines. The two Americans know that in the confusion of the previous night, many in their unit (the 43rd Infantry Division) killed or wounded one another, having mistaken each other for the enemy. They know they do not want that to happen to them. They decide on a plan of action. The soldiers will face each other and join left arms at the elbow in a Roman-style handshake. In their right hands they will hold a bayonet or a .45-caliber pistol. Then they will both go to sleep. They reason that if they are attacked, the guy they are holding onto has to be the good guy, so they will not shoot or slash at him. *It never occurs to them that one of them might sleep while the other guards.* They do not trust each other that much. These two soldiers, and hundreds like them, would be the subject of much discussion and debate in the years to come, beginning with a report filed a few weeks later by the XIV Corps Surgeon, the ranking medical officer on New Georgia.

Colonel Franklin T. Hallam was anxious to finish his report, so anxious in fact that he completed it prior to receiving supporting documentation from subordinate medical officers.<sup>1</sup> When he signed his "Report on Medical Service in the New Georgia Campaign," it was 31 October 1943. His urgency was not fueled by a need to get home to see children merrily trick or treating. Other, more malevolent hobgoblins had appeared, and he wanted to get the word to the South Pacific Area Theater Surgeon as quickly as possible. He was justifiably unconcerned with accuracy. He had the raw statistics, he had consulted subordinate surgeons, and, as the XIV Corps Surgeon, he was on New Georgia Island in the Solomons himself. Most of the information and insights contained in his report were products of his own eyes and ears. He listened, he asked questions, and most importantly, he heard the men of the 43rd Infantry Division speak to one another on New Georgia.

Hallam's confidence in his information, however, offered little comfort. The news from New Georgia was bad. There was no debating the numbers. The 43rd had suffered approximately 1,950 neuropsychiatric casualties, over 15 percent of the division's operating strength of 12,000. Although the 43rd had comprised only 40 percent of the New Georgia Occupation Force, they had contributed 80 percent of the neuropsychiatric casualties. The additional comparative statistics paint an even bleaker picture. Of the three Army divisions participating in the operation, the 43rd with its 1,950 well exceeded the 200 of the 37th Division, the 150 of the 25th Division, and the 200 Navy neuropsychiatric casualties.

True, the 25th was a regular Army division that had seen combat on Guadalcanal immediately before the New Georgia Operation. But the 37th Division was, as the 43rd, a National Guard Division participating in their first action. True also that the 43rd had been first on the island and was the main effort, supported later by the 37th and 25th. Somehow, however, these facts did not seem to ameliorate the problem for Colonel Hallam. He believed there were many other causes and told the theater surgeon that these causes were poor recruit screening, leadership in small units, orientation, discipline, physical fitness, combat fatigue, enemy action, noises, and mass hysteria.

With the exception of enemy action, the contributing factors Colonel Hallam documented are all the responsibility of leaders. The bottom line in Hallam's report was that the leadership of the 43rd Division had failed to prepare their men for combat or to lead them effectively during combat: "It was found that those units in which officers of company grade and noncommissioned officers had been evacuated because of 'war neurosis,' the total number evacuated from each company or similar unit was in direct proportion to the number of unit leaders evacuated. This gave us the first tangible evidence that incompetent or questionable leadership in small units was an important causative factor."<sup>2</sup>

Poor leadership has long been the default position to explain unit failures, to include excessive neuropsychiatric casualties. To Colonel Hallam, elbow deep in blood with no end in sight, it was also the logical explanation. Within it lies some of the truth, but not the whole truth. Multiple additional factors conspired together with leadership to ensure that many in the 43rd did not have the trust in or bond with their unit necessary to withstand the strain of their first combat. Hallam clearly recognizes the existence of some of these other factors, but it is unclear whether the embattled doctor had time to recognize the synergistic effect they had in combination with one another. In this case the whole does indeed exceed the sum of the parts. The circumstances and the system that placed men in harm's way on New Georgia did nothing to either foster or protect unit cohesion. Without this cohesion, individual soldiers and units as a whole are at increased risk for neuropsychiatric casualties.

The 1941 edition of Field Manual 100-5, the US Army's operations manual, includes this telling passage, "Man is the fundamental instrument in war; other instruments may change but he remains relatively constant. Unless his behavior and elemental attributes are understood, gross mistakes will be made in planning operations and troop leading."<sup>3</sup> One reads this passage and wonders why the Army bothered to commit such an obvious fact to paper. Surely no one would ever forget such an important concept. Unfortunately, it is the doom of man that he does forget. In February of 1944, only twenty months after the New Georgia Operation, the final report on New Georgia, submitted to a senior general officer in the War Department Operations Section, mentions neither neuropsychiatric casualties nor the 43rd Division. Above the "For Victory Buy United States War Bonds and Stamps" imprint, one reads about field sanitation, beach designation, mapping, and many other vital interests, but not one word about *men*.<sup>4</sup>

In The Pacific Theater in World War II, one neuropsychiatric casualty was evacuated from the theater for every soldier wounded in action.<sup>5</sup> In the case of the 43rd Division it is clear

that some of the “gross mistakes” predicted in Field Manual 100-5 were indeed made. The ramifications for any military force as it approaches the twenty first century are legion and based on the same fundamental factor applicable in the first century: man himself.

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<sup>1</sup>The report of the 37th Division Surgeon is dated 7 December 1943, and the report of the 2nd Battalion, 37th Infantry Regiment, 25th Division Surgeon is dated 23 December 1943.

<sup>2</sup>Colonel Franklin T. Hallam, “Report on Medical Service in the New Georgia Campaign,” Office of the XIV Corps Surgeon, 31 October 1943, Combined Arms Research Library, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, file no. N-6946. Colonel Hallam’s report is fascinating reading. In a document that must by standard operating procedure address everything from field sanitation through malaria to soldiers killed in action, Hallam spends over eight of his fifty-six pages discussing neuropsychiatric casualties. He refers to “the infectious aspect of the condition.” He also notes that medics were quick to crack, a factor which weighs heavily with a rifleman in harm’s way. In describing small unit action, he uses the words “break” and “panic.” With regard to leadership, he cites one company experiencing war neurosis casualties at the grades of second lieutenant (one), sergeant (five), and corporal (four). These ten leaders took with them thirty-six privates. Note: A similar version of Colonel Hallam’s report is available in Colonel William S. Mullins, ed., *Neuropsychiatry in World War II* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1973), vol. 2, *Overseas Theaters*, 1,063.

<sup>3</sup>US Army, Field Manual 100-5, *Field Service Regulations: Operations* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1941; reprint, GPO, 1992), 18 (page citation is to the reprint edition).

<sup>4</sup>Colonel Carl D. Silverthorne, “Brief for Lieutenant General Handy: Subject: Lessons Learned from Joint Operations in the New Georgia and Bougainville Operations,” 19 February 1944, Combined Arms Research Library, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, (microfilm). In a memo prepared by Colonel Silverthorne for then Major General Handy on 3 January 1944, Silverthorne relates in detail the facts of the 43rd’s failure. Lieutenant General Harmon, the ground forces commander in the South Pacific Area, writes two reports for Handy, the first submitted 3 August 1943 and the second 10 September 1943. The reports mention neither the 43rd nor neuropsychiatric casualties. In his summary of the year 1943, the 43rd Division Surgeon, Lieutenant Colonel Enion, also neglects to mention neuropsychiatric casualties.

<sup>5</sup>US Army, Field Manual 22-51, *Leaders Manual for Combat Stress Control* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1994), 1-4. In the European Theater of Operations the ratio was 1:4.

## CHAPTER 2

### MANNING, TRAINING, AND DEPLOYING THE 43RD

*The New York Times* reported Monday, 24 February 1941, as relatively routine for a world teetering on the brink of total war. Mussolini sang the praises of Nazi Germany, swearing to march by her side "to the end." The British Admiralty announced that the day before her Royal Navy had sunk eight Axis ships, sending 35,000 tons to the bottom of the Atlantic. War communiqués from London, Cairo, Rome, and Berlin each claimed glorious victories for their forces in the field. Himmler demanded more Reich babies, settling on six children per family as the magic number, and the Vichy Government was stridently predicting the German invasion of Britain.

Closer to home, the Roger's Peet Company, a Fifth Avenue gentleman's clothier warned, "There is only one Montagnac! But no one knows whether Sedan France will ever ship another yard of this famous overcoating."<sup>1</sup> Gentlemen concerned with sartorial splendor were advised to purchase their overcoats immediately, for \$100.00. At the Paramount Theatre one could see Henry Fonda and Barbara Stanwyck in *The Lady Eve*, and Radio City Music Hall would soon feature *So Ends Our Night*, with Frederick March and Margaret Sullivan. For those with more refined tastes, The Metropolitan Opera was performing Wagner's *Gotterdammerung* and Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*. James Hilton's novel about a shell-shocked World War I veteran, *Random Harvest*, was on the shelves for \$2.50. The exiled Grand Duchess Charlotte of Luxembourg and her consort Prince Felix had that Sunday lunched at Sherry's on Park Avenue, after attending mass at Saint Patrick's. The Brooklyn Celtics beat the New York Jewels, thirty-eight to thirty-four in American League Basketball, and the New York Rangers topped the Chicago Bruins in hockey at Madison Square Garden, four to three. Business was good. Capital investment was on the rise, and British orders had helped American steel manufacturers reach a record output. New Yorkers tuning in to WJF at 10:00 am could hear former Governor Alf

Landon speak about the Lend Lease Bill, and just before that they could hear a half-hour drama of Army life on WJZ. The weather was typical New York February, the high thirty-eight degrees Fahrenheit.<sup>2</sup>

Left out of *The New York Times* that Monday was the story that 24 February 1941 marked the day when thousands of men, their families, friends and acquaintances would no longer be able to keep the war in the newspapers or on the radio. On this day it was to become their war. Pursuant to Executive Order Number 8633, signed by President Roosevelt on 14 January 1941, the 43rd Infantry Division was commanded into national service.<sup>3</sup> The President's order was promulgated through General Order Number 2 of the 43rd Infantry Division. This order required, among other things, that commanders revoke all leaves and muster their soldiers. Included also in the order were immediate relief from duty in the National Guard and activation in the federal service, formalizing the cancellation of duties owed to separate New England States and forming the 43rd as a federalized fighting force.<sup>4</sup>

A grateful Second Lieutenant Howard Brown was one of the men mobilized as part of the 43rd. At the time he was working for The Brown and Sharpe Manufacturing Company in Providence and was making less than the \$125.00 a month to which he was entitled while on active duty. Brown happily packed his bags and joined his division. He describes his training experience in the following months as "intense" and believes that when the 43rd departed for the Pacific twenty months later they were "quite well trained." The only caveat he adds is "At least, I can vouch for the artillery."<sup>5</sup>

John Higgins, an infantryman of the 43rd, was not so sanguine about training. "The training at Camp Blanding was only fair, at first we had very little of the normal equipment. '03 rifles, WWI Helmets, WWI uniforms in some cases. Crew served weapons were WWI and in poor shape. Few trucks and shortages in all heavy equipment." He does proceed on to indicate, however, that the situation improved after "four or five months." Higgins had left a factory job in

New Britain, Connecticut, when the federal call came and recalls, "Mobilization had little affect on me as I was single, and most of us in the National Guard knew we were due to be called on active duty."<sup>6</sup>

What was happening to these New England men, while apparently drastic, was not out of the ordinary for the time. The federalization of National Guard units was becoming somewhat routine and was proceeding as planned. In all, eighteen National Guard divisions were inducted into federal service between September 1940 and November 1941.<sup>7</sup> The 43rd was just one of these. (See figures 1 and 2.)

A year earlier, as the Phony War in Europe gave way to the blitzkrieg and as the Japanese continued to build their "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere," American military planners began to show active concern. They feared for the security of the Panama Canal, the Hawaiian Islands, and the Philippines. They were also unnerved by Nazi demonstrations in South America and by June 1940 they believed that the collapse of the British and the French would jeopardize American safety. They determined the trigger for mobilization of the National Guard was the loss of the British or French fleets; this decision made in anticipation of American involvement to secure British and French colonies and against the background of Dunkirk. The Azores, Dakar, and Greenland began to appear in the War Planning Department's discussions. Captain Alan G. Kirk, the US Naval Attaché in London, advised his superior via telegram, "In my view safety of United States would be definitely in jeopardy should British Empire fall, and would expect Italo-German combination to move swiftly in South America and Caribbean areas . . . safety of canal seems paramount."<sup>8</sup> As a result, the first federalized National Guard units assembled and moved to their training camps in September 1940.

These divisions, unprepared for collective training and certainly for war, were mobilized to augment a regular army that was not in much better shape. True, unlike the National Guard, the Regular Army trained more than forty-eight evenings and two weeks a year, but it had no formal

organization above corps level and certainly nothing that could be called a field army headquarters. This army had three understrength regular infantry divisions which did not train as divisions, fielded antiquated equipment (what little of it they had), and possessed negligible armored units.<sup>9</sup>

It was in this unprepared environment that the 43rd assembled, disposed of administrative duties, and entrained for their first of many training experiences: Camp Blanding, Florida. Camp Blanding is an inhospitable place on the Florida panhandle. Rife with sand fleas and mosquitoes, temperature and humidity soar together to create an atmosphere of near suffocation, and what does not bite or sting is a vegetable or grass that will scratch and tear at clothing or skin. (A good measure of Blanding's terrain is that it is currently used to train US Army Rangers.) To this garden spot in 1941 went men from Danbury, Connecticut; Bangor, Maine; Newport, Rhode Island; and many other New England cities and hamlets. WTIC radio in Hartford broadcast their induction into federal service ceremony from the Hartford Armory, Headquarters of the 43rd. The Connecticut Governor himself watched 808 officers, 9 warrant officers, and 10,467 enlisted men take the federal oath. He may or may not have noted that the total number, 11,287, was somewhat short of the division's 20,000 authorized strength.<sup>10</sup>

These New Englanders closed at Camp Blanding on 19 March 1941. Their movement consisted of 33 special trains with 240 passenger and 190 baggage cars, as well as 7 vehicular convoys totaling 737 vehicles. Despite a March blizzard in New York and New Jersey, all hands arrived safely in Florida. The vehicular movement in particular was no small task, as "Motor transportation personnel of the division had had not too much experience,"<sup>11</sup> this dearth of experience as much due to lack of vehicles as training opportunities. Howard Brown shed an amusing light on artillery movements, "When we moved between camps in the states the artillery moved by motor convoy. . . . We'd have stragglers. I suspected that much of the straggling was

due to individual trucks stopping without permission at local soft and hard drink establishments.

It was not too difficult to hide a 6x6 jeep.”<sup>12</sup>

The first of two “yearbooks” produced by the 43rd, for the 43rd, described Camp

Blanding training as follows:

The division arrived at Camp Blanding on March 19, 1941. Immediately a thirteen week training program was initiated, culminating in tactical problems ranging from small units to brigade versus brigade. During this period both officers and enlisted men were permitted to spend weekends with their families residing in Gainesville, Stark, Jacksonville, Green Cove Springs, St. Augustine, Palatka and Keystone Heights. Up until this time the division was below authorized strength. Camp Wheeler, at Macon, Georgia, was directed to furnish the division with additional men from Selective Service sources. By coincidence, the class of Selective Service men from Camp Wheeler assigned to the 43rd Division was composed largely of men originally from New England. These selectees were among the first in the United States to complete their basic training period.<sup>13</sup>

A considerably more lyrical version appears in the second yearbook:

The division was moving to Camp Blanding, Florida. . . .When we first got there, the camp hadn't even been completely constructed. . . .We griped; we cursed out the sergeants; we talked about the officers. Gosh, when I think about it, it makes me laugh to remember how we yelled about the dirt, the sun and the heat. 'Course we didn't know that we'd be fighting in places that makes [sic] Blanding look like an upholstered living room. Anyhow, we trained there. We learned about military courtesy. None of us could understand how that stuff could make us good infantrymen. . . . My mom sure got a kick out of my salute. That was in July '41 when I went home on furlough. A lot of us got furloughs then.<sup>14</sup>

These accounts hint at two important facts. First, not only was the 43rd understrength, but their roster was partially filled out by the Selective Service. The Selective Service system had hastily established a series of Replacement Training Centers (RTCs), designed to provide mobilizing units a fully trained individual soldier. Selective Service, however, had not fully established itself until October 1940. The first of its RTCs was not functional until March 1941; the same month the 43rd arrived at Camp Blanding.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, the Infantry Replacement Training Center at Camp Wheeler, Georgia, dutifully provided its very first thirteen-week course graduates to the 43rd, 405 of them arriving on 17 June 1941, followed in the succeeding months

by another 6,285 replacements. The commanding generals of the 43rd and the RTC wisely colluded to ensure the first load of replacements was from New England.<sup>16</sup>

The second and perhaps more salient fact is the granting of furloughs and the evenings and weekends with relatives during the basic training period. Some relatives followed the men to Florida for the summer, and eventually all the way to Fort Ord, California.<sup>17</sup> The problem this camp following created is that it may have inhibited the critical period of bonding required in unit basic training. There is no evidence of the normal rituals and rights of passage so important to the formation of a cohesive fighting unit.<sup>18</sup> The facts indicate that the primary support group for some of the men remained the family, rather than the unit. There is no evidence of training hardship, other than the admittedly inhospitable environs of Camp Blanding itself. Doubtless, commanders were trying to do the right thing for their soldiers. These men had left jobs and families with relatively little notice. They had to tie up loose ends. Unforeseeable to commanders at the time, it appears those loose ends coiled themselves into a rope around some soldiers that did not allow them to transfer their loyalty to their unit.

In a study conducted of German prisoners of war at the close of World War II, researchers found that when the family retained priority over the unit in the soldier's mind, he would be more likely to desert or surrender. These researchers stress the importance of the *primary group* in influencing the soldier's behavior. In 1898, French sociologist Emile Durkheim discussed primary groups, defining them as "small groups characterized by face to face interaction, interdependency, and strong group identification such as families and very close friends."<sup>19</sup> If the primary group remains the family rather than the unit, when unit and familial loyalties conflict, the family and its needs will prevail:

It appears that a soldier's ability to resist is a function of the capacity of his immediate primary group (his squad or section) to avoid social disintegration. When the individual's immediate group, and its supporting formations, met his basic organic needs, offered him affection and esteem from both officers and comrades, supplied him with a sense of power and adequately regulated his relations with authority, the elements of self-concern in battle, which would lead to the disruption of the effective functioning of his primary

group, was minimized. . . . Prisoners of war remarked with considerable frequency that discussions about alternative paths of action by groups of soldiers who were entirely defeatist arose not from discussions about the war in its political or strategic aspects, but rather from discussions about the soldiers' families. The recollection of concrete family experiences reactivated sentiments of dependence on the family for psychological support and correspondingly weakened the hold of the military primary group. It was in such contexts that German soldiers towards the end of the war were willing to discuss group surrender.<sup>20</sup>

The correlation between German and American soldiers assumes that their commonality as soldiers overrides cultural factors. While soldier identification as a soldier and with other soldiers may not transcend widely diverse cultures (i.e., Japanese versus American), the similarity in Judeo-Christian backgrounds between German and American soldiers validates the assumption. Soldiers, especially those who have been in combat, inhabit together a world that is above minor cultural differences. Reflecting the need for the unit to become the soldier's primary group, veteran Marshal Bugeaud comments, "A man is not a soldier until he is no longer homesick."<sup>21</sup> Physical proximity to home is an important factor. If the home (family) moves with the soldier, the family hinders transfer of primary loyalty to the unit.

Social psychology, a discipline unknown prior to World War II, would later confirm the efficacy of primary groups, squad bonding, and unit socialization as an inoculation of sorts against the stresses of battle. Army Psychiatrist Colonel Albert J. Glass notes in *Neuropsychiatry in World War II* that "perhaps the most significant contribution of World War II military psychiatry was recognition of the sustaining influence of the small combat group."<sup>22</sup> There is, however, a negative element to such bonding. It can facilitate mutinies, war crimes, and panic. In the case of the 43rd, however, it may have contributed to a lack of leader aggressiveness in enforcing standards.<sup>23</sup> Robert Palmer notes the difficulty of swiftly turning civilians into soldiers, "In the automobile plant the assembly line foreman had been addressed by his underlings in the free and easy spirit of 'Hi Joe.' When affiliation placed the group in uniform, 'Joe,' by virtue of his supervisory status as a civilian, became a captain. . . . The workers, sergeants, corporals, and privates, found it difficult . . . to think of their captain in any other light than 'Joe.'"<sup>24</sup> For this

very reason, in the professional Army, soldiers, upon promotion, are automatically transferred to other units. Still, the primary group as a setter of standards and as a supporter of the individual is critical to unit success. Samuel Stouffer in his exhaustive study of World War II soldier behavior notes that the primary group “supported and sustained the individual in stresses he would otherwise not have been able to withstand.”<sup>25</sup>

The men of the 43rd at Camp Blanding were distracted not only by evening and weekend trips away with family, but also by having to partially build the camp itself. Arriving in the late winter of 1941, they found tents rather than even temporary fixed buildings. The 31st Division, having arrived a few months before, had it even worse. Van R. Mayhall of the 31st Division remembers, “The winterized tents were not completed when we arrived, coming from civilian life to wet, cold, nearly outdoor living. . . . We sent our best men out to find lumber to complete the tents, the company street was shoe deep in mud so we borrowed all the gravel and sawdust we could find to fill the street. . . . The sick call was very heavy and many were put into the hospital.”<sup>26</sup>

Soldiers arriving in training camps and finding them incomplete reflects neither nefarious intent nor incompetence by the “powers that were.” It was merely another indication of the hundreds of challenges facing an isolationist, economically depressed nation that had convinced itself that the Great War had put an end to warfare. The construction corps and staff sections had to wait on the War Department to give the order to build the camps. The War Department likewise had to wait on Congress to pass legislation authorizing the federalization of National Guard Units and the Selective Service Act. Approval of these measures was by no means guaranteed. The areas in which the camps were to be built could not be acquired, preventing the early construction of roads or other supporting infrastructure. It is ironic that Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall had to explain these factors to a concerned Congress in February

1941, telling them that, yes, construction crews had anticipated the trouble that would come with cold weather, but could do nothing about it in a timely manner.<sup>27</sup>

The *43rd History* blithely describes the situation at Camp Blanding as follows: "Camp Blanding and the area therein to which the division was assigned was still under final stages of construction which with normal development continued in varying degree toward the stay of the division at that station. The Camp was shared with the 31st Infantry Division from the deep south."<sup>28</sup> Somebody painted a white line between the 43rd and the 31st to demarcate the Mason-Dixon line,<sup>29</sup> but North-South relations were not the problem at Blanding. Although civilian contractors did much of the construction, soldiers arriving there in the winter and spring of 1941 spent considerable time building rather than training. Despite the distractions, however, the 43rd drilled, exercised, got inspected, and conducted collective training to include brigade versus brigade maneuvers during their initial thirteen weeks at Blanding.<sup>30</sup>

The next phase in the swirling maelstrom of catch-up training for the 43rd was the fabled Louisiana Maneuvers. After leaves and furloughs were complete, the division entrained or entrucked for Dry Prong, Louisiana, closing on 5 August 1941. The *43rd History* characterizes the Louisiana Maneuvers as tactical and administrative forced marching and blackout driving through dust and mud. It goes on to complain about the chiggers, red bugs, and ticks, but saves its greatest criticism for "One tactical policy . . . which seriously effected [sic] training and morale of the division was the withdrawal . . . of a great number of officers of all ranks to staff the umpire requirements of higher headquarters."<sup>31</sup> The *43rd History* reports that these officers were withdrawn for training even before the maneuvers began, requiring junior officers and in some cases noncommissioned officers to provide leadership at the lower levels. Such comments are significant because they reflect an attitude that does not recognize the value of junior leader training. Without a doubt, the removal of officers for umpire duties is distracting; more distracting, however, is their removal permanently in combat.

However, the *43rd History* did have a point. How could small units develop cohesion if they never maneuvered together with the same men? Regardless of how one views it, the soldiers seem to have vented their anger on the umpires themselves, "News Item: Louisiana Maneuver umpire shot by wax pellets from blank cartridge. Culprits say they resented decision ordering them back to new positions in rocky ground. Officers' condition reported painful but not critical."<sup>32</sup>

To the individual soldier, the Louisiana Maneuvers tended to appear as one long, muddy mosquito dodge. To the War Department in 1940, however, they were a most valuable eye-opener for the state of military preparedness. America "discovered" that her National Guard units, on paper boasting 22,000 men per division, were routinely reporting less than one-half of those men present for training. Thousands of the men who reported for duty had never previously attended field training. Iron pipes were used to replicate cannon, there were more Springfields than Garands in the units, "tanks" were actually trucks used to simulate the real thing, observation planes stood in for bombers, and nobody had sufficient mortars or antitank guns.<sup>33</sup>

The situation had improved somewhat by the time the 43rd trooped through Louisiana in the summer of 1941. Basic supply shortages had been made up, a tenuous manpower replacement system was in place, and units were receiving some valuable training. Now that real training was being accomplished, true performance evaluations were possible. Unfortunately, the performance of most units was far from desirable. Senior commanders noted failures of units to discipline their movements with regard to threat from the air, the poor leadership demonstrated by officers, and weak personal discipline. One basic leader action, keeping the men informed, was not even attempted. "General Marshall became conscious that the ranks were densely ignorant of the tactical purpose of the maneuvers in which they themselves were engaged, and resultantly critical of their own and higher commanders."<sup>34</sup> One platoon leader noted, "On these maneuvers we spent a whole lot of time wondering what was going on. . . . We must have had a blocking role late in

the maneuver, because we took off in the general direction of Shreveport. We walked 154 miles. . . . Being an important 2nd Lieutenant in charge of a rifle platoon I fully expected to be let in on what was going on, like as what direction are these people we are maneuvering against.”<sup>35</sup>

Edgar Jaynes, a reservist brought on active duty from his teaching job at American International University in Springfield, Maryland, sums up the Louisiana Maneuvers, “My experience: Rain, mud, scorpions and ‘Where are we?’ On the whole though it worked out better than we thought. The unit began to sort itself out and experience greatly improved execution.” Jaynes, a holder of a Master in Business Administration degree from Boston University, had volunteered for active duty “on the basis of a popular song of the era, ‘I’ll Be Back in a Year, Dear.”<sup>36</sup> Perhaps Jaynes should have compared notes with fellow 43rd soldier Richard F. Potter. Among Potter’s Louisiana Maneuvers memories is a meeting with a prophet, “I recall talking briefly with a man as we walked along the banks of the Mississippi River, who warned we would be at war before Christmas. I doubt however, that he figured the Japanese would be the enemy to launch hostilities.”<sup>37</sup> One year was about to become four long years for Jaynes, Potter, and the rest of America; unprepared for it as they all were.

The Louisiana Maneuvers revealed an Army that not only had to find the answers, but had yet to identify all of the questions. General Marshall and his staff went a long way towards accomplishing both. By the time the 43rd went to Louisiana, the most pressing questions were becoming increasingly clear: How many divisions will it take to win a war? How many men do we put in the air corps? How do we balance manning National Guard Divisions against manning war production and agriculture? How long does it take to train a division for combat, and what is the best way to do that?<sup>38</sup> On top of all of this was the need for the Roosevelt administration to proceed cautiously. Congress and the American public were not necessarily keen on war preparations.<sup>39</sup> In the midst of this chaos, creation and preservation of unit cohesion was not considered a priority. Mass production became the means to produce an army.

These issues were far from the collective mind of the 43rd as they returned to Camp Blanding from Louisiana. They were glad to be back to hot showers and at least semi-permanent living quarters. Blanding, which had looked so bleak a few months before, looked not too bad after wandering in the swamps. The final War Department assessment of their performance was that it had “not been conspicuous in Louisiana.”<sup>40</sup> The War Department failed to note that the training strategies and assets it provided for the maneuvers, or for any major training of this period, did not include anything that could be considered realism. “Battle inoculation,” as it would later be called, inspires confidence in soldiers by introducing them, as much as possible, to the real sights and sounds of combat. The battlefield is a confusing, lonely, and scary place. Partial removal of the shock effect and the element of the unknown can do much to fortify soldiers against fear.<sup>41</sup> In the American Army in 1941, training with trucks for tanks and in some cases logs for machine guns, realism was sacrificed for basic maneuver skills.

The return to Camp Blanding in September 1941 brought more than better living. It also brought a new commanding general, Brigadier General John Hutchinson Hester, West Point 1908. Born in Albany, Georgia, in 1886, General Hester had seen action in the Philippines as well as on the Punitive Expedition into Mexico in 1916. He was a graduate of the School of the Line as well as the Command and General Staff College. He served as the Professor of Military Science at the University of Minnesota and had completed tours in Puerto Rico and on the War Department Staff. He had most recently been the Commander of the RCT at Camp Wheeler and was therefore no stranger to the 43rd.<sup>42</sup>

Howard Brown admits no intimate relationship with General Hester, but describes him as “an aloof, superannuated officer who needed to retire long before he got command of the division.” Brown believes that Hester spent too much time on “spit and polish” and not enough time on “actual small unit and combat training.”<sup>43</sup> This is a common soldier complaint that echoes down the centuries and that might be easily dismissed were not Brown an officer at the time.

Additionally, Ed Jaynes supports Brown, "He [Hester] was by no means an efficient officer for combat. I can still see him sitting on a log. . . apparently not too sure of what it was all about."<sup>44</sup> Jaynes also relates a tale of Hester relieving a lieutenant for storing a broom with the brushes down. One gets the uncomfortable feeling that at times Hester would compare favorably with Captain Queeg of *The Caine Mutiny*. Still, Lieutenant General McNair's assessment of Brigadier General Hester, sent to General Marshall, was a terse, "Untried, but should do well."<sup>45</sup>

General Hester and the 43rd had about a month to adjust to each other, and then it was off to Fort Lawn, South Carolina, to participate in the Third Army versus First Army Maneuvers. The War Department view of the Carolina Maneuvers was that while they showed considerable improvement over the Louisiana Maneuvers, there were still major problems in air-to-ground coordination. Additionally, the Secretary of War held a meeting in his office with senior officers upon the completion of the Carolina Maneuvers, where the central issue discussed was tank tactics and equipment. This issue reveals an orientation on Europe's open battlefields, less than a week before the attack on Pearl Harbor.<sup>46</sup> In the words of Van Mayhall, "None of us had ever considered that we would ever have to fight anybody but the Germans up until December 7, 1941."<sup>47</sup> The view through the eyes of the 43rd reveals happiness to be out of the swamps and training in cooler weather.<sup>48</sup> The irony fairly drips from the pages of the *43rd History*. These men would within eighteen months be fighting for their lives in the jungle swamps of the South Pacific.

The 43rd returned to Camp Blanding from South Carolina on 6 December 1941, full of anticipation of a quiet Christmas furlough. By this time the division rostered men from twenty-nine states, and travel arrangements alone were difficult. The attack on Pearl Harbor compounded the difficulty.<sup>49</sup> Van Mayhall of the 31st Division heard the flash over his radio at Blanding, while the news was passed tent to tent for the benefit of those without radios. Mayhall was writing a letter to his mother at the time of the announcement, "My first line to my mother was, 'Dear

mother, I think I will be able to come home for Christmas.' . . . My next line to my mother was, 'Mom, I just heard something on the radio that makes me think I won't be home for Christmas.'"<sup>50</sup>

Difficult travel arrangements were merely an indicator of a personnel struggle that was in the making years before Pearl Harbor, a struggle that had gained considerable strength in the eighteen months preceding Japan's "sudden and dastardly attack." On 30 June 1940, the Army numbered 267,000. By 31 December 1941, that number had grown to 1,679,000. In General Marshall's haste to prepare, quantity was stressed over quality. America was mass-producing soldiers and units, a process better suited to machines than men and military organizations. Pearl Harbor and America's subsequent declaration of war forced a hard look at just who was wearing a uniform. Although some screening had taken place, the look revealed a none too pretty picture.<sup>51</sup>

The myth between the wars had been that the National Guard would provide a cadre of trained officers to train new recruits and units upon a general mobilization. As Lieutenant General Leslie J. McNair, who was handed the training mess by General Marshall, wryly observed, "The outstanding generalization of this experience, in my view, is that we did not have in fact the great mass of trained officers that were carried on the books. . . . We have verified the inevitable, that inadequately trained officers cannot train troops effectively."<sup>52</sup> The bottom line was that "Officers from the civilian components, [National Guard and Reserve] instead of being ready to assist in the task of converting a mass of civilians into soldiers, had themselves required a long period of further training."<sup>53</sup> At best, the "ninety-day wonders" hurriedly created as second lieutenants might be assigned with an experienced noncommissioned officer (NCO) who understood training, but these NCOs were also in short supply.<sup>54</sup> At worst, a recruit might run into a physically unfit, inept, and untrained officer under whom to train.<sup>55</sup> The National Guard, too, was loath to see its

officers pulled away from their own units to train others, even though the quality of the training they could provide was questionable.

As this leadership problem was surfacing, it was compounded by the sweeping policy changes made in late 1941. President Roosevelt's executive order federalizing the eighteen National Guard Divisions had been issued with the understanding that these divisions would be active for one year to train.<sup>56</sup> Pearl Harbor changed all that, ending "all thought of Army reduction."<sup>57</sup> It is a tribute to the 43rd that only two officers and a "few" enlisted men left the division, due to compelling reasons to release them at the one-year mark.<sup>58</sup>

Having survived this initial negligible loss, however, the 43rd, along with the rest of the National Guard Divisions, would within the next sixteen months undergo such great personnel policy and organizational changes that any unit cohesion established up to that point was virtually nullified. An additional thirty-five officers were lost due to changes in the reclassification and physical requirements policies. On top of these policies, in August 1941 a policy was announced which allowed the release of all enlisted men over twenty-eight years of age. The 43rd promptly lost an additional 180 soldiers. While that number may seem negligible against a division roster approaching 16,000 men, each man lost had trained with a squad or section (primary group) and to an extent had established the intimate bonds required to sustain them in combat. Their removal disrupted this cohesion. A further loss of twenty-five experienced officers, too old to serve in their present grades and unable to move up to the next higher grade due to promotion requirements and lack of vacancies shook up the leadership still more. The cryptic entry in the *43rd History*, "a great many more officers were assigned to administrative service positions among post, camp, and stations," indicates that the personnel turbulence cut far deeper than the numbers above reflect.<sup>59</sup>

Still in all, the *43rd History* was philosophical about the losses, "The operation of these various policies . . . could not help but be disturbing to the training and efficiency of the

division,”<sup>60</sup> is the strongest comment available decrying the shakeup. The *43rd History* does however, in the same paragraph, report arrival of replacement officers as “negligible,” and when they did arrive, they had no field gear. “The high point was touched with the arrival of one group at midnight in torrential rain after a 90-mile truck ride from the maneuver replacement center in low shoes, golf bags, tennis racquets, and beautiful new luggage.”<sup>61</sup>

Notwithstanding the personnel changes, perhaps the most disturbing event affecting the 43rd was the change in January 1942 from a square (four infantry regiments) to a triangular (three infantry regiments) division. The change stripped the division of an entire Infantry Regiment, the 102nd, along with all its supporting units. In a chart developed by the War Department to depict this drastic change, it all looks so very simple. This unit is placed next to that unit, like children’s building blocks or similarly shaped puzzle pieces.<sup>62</sup> The chart, entitled “Building an Infantry Triangular Division,” does not address the 43rd’s eleven months training as a square division. In most cases, building is much less painful than changing. Not only were the commanders and staff used to maneuvering a square division, but the men within those units had gotten used to each other. That trust was damaged now.

In a study of Army Ground Forces battle casualties completed in 1946, the Army chides itself for this “one unit is exchangeable for another” mentality, “It is purely a matter of group solidarity and training and sense of oneness. . . . The substitution of one tank battalion for another in an infantry division appears on paper as a matter of no great moment. To the persons directly concerned it is a little short of catastrophic.”<sup>63</sup>

What to the planners in Washington looked so neat and clean perhaps looked to the 43rd like a plot to strip them of what little training, trust, and unit cohesion they had developed. They lost the 102nd Infantry Regiment, after providing it with the personnel and equipment necessary for immediate overseas deployment. The additional forty-four unit redesignations, four reassignments, and twenty disbandments fill up two single-spaced typed pages in the *43rd*

*History*.<sup>64</sup> To sum up the change from square to triangular division, the 43rd went from four infantry regiments, two in each brigade, to three infantry regiments not brigaded.

Reorganization is not a new problem, having existed in the first century. "We trained very hard. But it seemed that every time we were beginning to form into teams, we would be reorganized. I was to learn later in life that we tend to meet any new situation by reorganizing. And what a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress while producing confusion, inefficiency, and demoralization."<sup>65</sup> Petronius in 50 A.D. made this particular observation. He correctly identifies the temptation to shuffle the deck when one is unsure of the game for which he is about to deal. As comforting as motion is, it is not necessarily progress.

The 43rd did not have much time to ponder the changes. They had just made their sixth major move in eleven months, arriving at Camp Shelby, Mississippi on 19 February 1942.<sup>66</sup> At Shelby, Officer Candidate School demanded over 1,300 additional men of the 43rd to train and serve as officers nationwide. As if this were not enough, the division lost 450 more enlisted men to provide cadres for the formation of new units.<sup>67</sup> If anyone was thinking about unit cohesion, that thought remained far down the priority list as America geared up its unprepared war machine.

Training Camp Shelby resembled training at Camp Blanding. The division spent a considerable amount of time repairing ranges and conducted only one night movement. The division became known as "Hester's Happy Hustling Housewives,"<sup>68</sup> hardly a moniker one values for a combat unit. Training was also not allowed to get in the way of family activities. More leaves and furloughs in July, and the *43rd History* reports that: "Hattiesburg, Mississippi, 12 miles from the Camp Shelby Reservation, and other nearby towns furnished reasonably adequate accommodations for visiting families and many members of the division were enabled to have their families with them."<sup>69</sup>

While at Camp Shelby, the newly promoted Major General Hester and the 43rd were charged with the final inspections of departing units and the administration of organizations not part of the 43rd.<sup>70</sup> Causes for the lack of leadership, cohesion, and effective training for the 43rd are slowly starting to emerge as a result of an unprepared nation using any and all means to give the minimum amount of training to the maximum amount of men in the shortest time possible. Absentee ballots from the 43rd for the fall 1942 election show that the division rostered men from every state save Utah and Nevada.<sup>71</sup> By this time it was no longer appropriate to call the 43rd a cohesive New England division.

The individual effects of the personnel movements, replacements, and duties of the 43rd Infantry Division may be difficult to appreciate without a compressed look at one of their subordinate infantry regiments. In a sense, the activities of the division as a whole appear as the middle of a bullwhip when flicked by its holder. There is movement but not as little as at the holder's wrist and not as much as at the end. Infantry regiments, as smaller organizations, are much closer to the end of the whip. A flick of the handle by the War Department results in a major disturbance at the end, the infantry regiment. A close look at the 169th Infantry Regiment of the 43rd Division provides a clear picture of this disturbance in unit cohesion:

On induction into federal service, the 169th rostered 1,958 officers and men. From this beginning strength of 1,958, the 169th ended up with 2,313 men, but not before losing 2,533 and gaining 2,888. Additionally, 1,800 of their gains were completely untrained and received after their major field training exercises in Louisiana and South Carolina. Their new commander was a Regular Army officer assigned from outside the regiment and joined them also after these exercises (figure 3).<sup>72</sup> Personnel managers would call the 5,421 face changes "personnel turbulence," a term meaningless to soldiers in squads and sections whose primary groups were constantly being ripped apart. Busy with strategy, reeling from Axis victories, and grasping desperately for the offensive, America military planners ignored one infantry regiment

experiencing well over 100 percent personnel turbulence, if they even noticed. It is an understatement to quote Robert Palmer who notes in *The Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops* that: "Men remaining with their organizations were a very much picked-over lot."<sup>73</sup>

While the 43rd struggled through movements, reorganizations, and training in the summer of 1942, events of great weight and moment were taking place in the Pacific, events that would bring the 43rd ultimately to its baptism of fire on New Georgia. Allied difficulties in both New Guinea and on Guadalcanal prompted the order for the 43rd to move from Camp Shelby to its port of embarkation in August 1942. After culling out an additional 350 men unsuitable for overseas deployment, the 43rd dutifully entrained, arriving at Fort Ord, California, on 10 September 1942. The division spent the next three weeks completing those tasks required to qualify them for overseas deployment, including additional weapons and amphibious training. They also accepted filler personnel to partially make up for those soldiers who had, for one of the reasons previously mentioned, left the 43rd.<sup>74</sup>

Richard Potter endured the long train ride from Camp Shelby to Fort Ord, stopping only once at Needles to switch trains. Fort Ord itself, however, proved to be a pleasant experience for Potter. He was made warrant officer while there, and also got a chance to visit with his parents briefly. They drove him to the Monterey docks where he saw Errol Flynn and Rita Hayworth making a movie about the Norwegian resistance.<sup>75</sup> Ed Jaynes' memories of Fort Ord are a little more matter-of-fact, "Fort Ord training good. We practiced small boat landings with boats that had no front end ramps, just over the side. The Navy people were just learning also. Lots of bumps but as I recall no deaths."<sup>76</sup>

Final preparations and training complete, the advanced party of the 43rd set out from San Francisco under the command of Assistant Division Commander Brigadier General Leonard F. Wing. They passed under the Golden Gate on 24 September 1942 at 1211 hours for a destination

that was to most of them unknown for security reasons. On 1 October, the remainder of the division (minus the 172nd Infantry Regiment and supporting elements, who were to stay behind for more intensive amphibious training) departed San Francisco. Escorted by two destroyers and a Navy dirigible, they “began the voyage to the great unknown.”<sup>77</sup> After the dirigible had blinked bon voyage and blackout conditions were affected, the 43rd began to get their sea legs. The division (minus the 172nd) were embarked aboard the former Dollar Liner USS *President Grant*, the US Navy transports *Day Star*, *Tabinta*, and *Maui*, and the Dutch vessels *Bluemfontain* and *Boschfontain*.<sup>78</sup>

Richard Potter describes the trip as “tedious . . . zig-zagging across the Pacific Ocean under complete blackout conditions.” He also has some choice words for the US Merchant Marine, concerning their failure to provide better food. He describes what they provided as an “everlasting disgrace.”<sup>79</sup> Howard Brown gives a less emotional but no more complimentary description: “Conditions for the enlisted men aboard transports were atrocious. They were stacked three and four deep in holds where the ventilation left a great deal to be desired. Guys got seasick with the resultant stench. This tended to infect others with the same *mal du mer*. The men were super when it came to bearing up. . . . The men came topside for training and the only gripes I heard concerned the food.”<sup>80</sup> Surviving the waves and the poor food, the 43rd (minus the 172nd) arrived safely at Auckland, New Zealand, on 22 October 1942, where “an atmosphere of congeniality prevailed.”<sup>81</sup> The term “safe arrival” did not apply to the 172nd Infantry Regiment.

The 172nd, having completed their additional amphibious training, embarked aboard the former Dollar Liner USS *President Coolidge* on 5 October 1942, just four days after their 43rd Division brethren. Aboard the *Coolidge* with them were the 103rd Field Artillery Battalion, 1st Platoon, Alpha Company, 118th Engineers, and C Company, 118th Medical Battalion,<sup>82</sup> as well as a harbor defense battalion. These units were to sail to Espiritu Santo, where the harbor defense battalion would garrison and defend the heavy bomber base there. The 172nd was scheduled to

relieve the Marines on Guadalcanal.<sup>83</sup> Arrive they would, but not safely. On entering Espiritu Santo harbor, the *Coolidge* struck two US mines and sank.<sup>84</sup> Ed Jaynes remembers the sinking:

One of my friends was looking over the side and called for me to come and see this strange object. About then it blew a large hole in the side of the ship. We had caught a line between two mines so at about the same time the other mine blew. As previously practiced we returned to our bed area to await the message to evacuate. . . . Fortunately the skipper, Captain Nelson, turned toward the beach and the bow hung on the ledge giving us time to get off. In the meantime the First Mate was screaming "Get off the goddamned ship!"<sup>85</sup>

Someone had tried to warn the *Coolidge* by blinker light from shore, but the warning came too late, even though the master tried to back the engines.<sup>86</sup> Miraculously, of the approximately 5,440 men aboard, only 5 were lost in the sinking. One of these men died saving others. Army Mess Officer Captain Elwood Euart was trapped below decks when the *Coolidge* slid off the reef upon which her bow was beached and sank. Captain Euart had been guiding enlisted men from the hold to escape routes. Another man aboard, like many on the *Coolidge*, arrived on dry land by raft without even getting wet. "I still had a crease in my pants" he recalls. The *Coolidge* took with it to the bottom the entire supply of atabrine (antimalaria medicine) for Guadalcanal, as well as most of the soldiers' personal equipment. Also aboard were trucks, jeeps, and various other items which would never see combat.<sup>87</sup> Army folklore has it that when the Commander of the 172nd Infantry Regiment, Colonel James A. Lewis, and the Island Commander, Brigadier General William I. Rose, met in waist-deep water, their exchange occurred as follows: "Sir, Colonel Lewis, commanding, reports for duty." Returning Colonel Lewis' salute, General Rose replied with a half smile "Go back and do it right."<sup>88</sup>

One significant effect of the *Coolidge* sinking was not immediately apparent, but would become shockingly so eight months later. The 172nd was scheduled to join the Marine Corps in the battle for Guadalcanal. Had they done so on schedule, they would have fought alongside the Marines on a mature battlefield, thus easing them into combat and giving them valuable, real experiences to share with the rest of the 43rd. As it turned out, they arrived at Guadalacanal after

the battle was over, and while their view of that island gave them experience, the experience was vicarious only.

While the 172nd and company were drying off and refitting on Espiritu Santo, life had continued on for the remainder of the 43rd in Auckland. The stay there was not a long one. The *43rd History* reports the approximately sixty days spent in New Zealand as a time to assemble vehicles and to march and maneuver in the hills of North Island.<sup>89</sup> Howard Brown states, "In Auckland we did very little training. The time was taken up mainly with logistics. Until the *Coolidge* went down we were scheduled to relieve the 1st Marine Division at Guadalcanal. . . . In addition, we had received much new equipment, which required considerable handling and assembly."<sup>90</sup> All in all, the short time in New Zealand reveals no significant training other than hill climbing. Anyone joining the 43rd after its last major maneuvers in North Carolina did little field training with the men with whom he would fight. There is another cryptic note in the always understated *43rd History*. It seems that in New Zealand one enlisted man was lost by "self-destruction."<sup>91</sup>

Due to limited shipping, the next move for the 43rd was spread from 2 November 1942 to 26 December 1942, but move they did, on no fewer than thirteen different transports, from New Zealand to Noumea, New Caledonia. The 43rd's mission was to defend the central sector of this 220-mile-long and 30-mile-wide strip of land, located 1,000 miles northeast of New Zealand in the Loyalty Island chain. The division went about the business of establishing its outposts and positioning strong points in the coastal areas. Undaunted by the jungle terrain and widely scattered positions, the 43rd Signal Company laid 150 miles of communication wire and maintained an additional 1,800 miles. Division headquarters maintained contact with the 172nd Regiment still at Espiritu Santo through daily flights between there and New Caledonia. As time permitted, the division ran three-day field problems at company level to familiarize the men with jungle fighting conditions. Although no malarial mosquitoes lived on New Caledonia, "the

swarms of the common variety were of great nuisance value.”<sup>92</sup> Additional amphibious training was planned for two of the division’s three infantry regiments, but before it could occur, the 43rd received another set of sailing orders, this time to Guadalcanal, or to what the *43rd History* refers to as “the orchestra seats.”<sup>93</sup>

Escape from New Caledonia would prove to be an expensive proposition for the 43rd. While on the island they had to pay their dues to the overall war effort in the South Pacific. Noumea, along with Espiritu Santo and later Guadalcanal, was quickly becoming a major logistics site for the effort in the South Pacific. Its harbor was jammed with transports and freighters, all either loading or unloading. All of this frenetic movement was in preparation for what was to become an operation of grisly familiarity for the 43rd: TOENAILS, or the seizure of New Georgia Island and the capture of Munda Airfield.<sup>94</sup>

So, training or no training, amphibious or otherwise, the 43rd Division spent most of its man-hours on New Caledonia loading and unloading supplies. “Lack of service troops at Noumea . . . resulted in drawing very heavily upon the division for labor details and during the most critical period 1,700 men were on special duty in that area as dock crews, M.P.s and in the growing Island Command Headquarters.”<sup>95</sup> One wonders how many small units were affected by these details, how much training was cancelled, how many soldiers did not get to know their weapons, leaders, buddies, or themselves. The final price for the 43rd was nine officers (including the division judge advocate and signal officer) as well as seventy-five men, a price paid to staff the New Caledonia Island Headquarters.<sup>96</sup>

John Higgins describes the perpetual pattern of the 43rd: “While in New Caledonia we established a camp site in tents, trained in the hills of the island, fired all of our weapons, and became acclimated to the tropical heat, rain and jungles. Some division troops were assigned to Tontouta air base and to the docks at Noumea Harbor as work crews.”<sup>97</sup> Never pure training undiluted by unrelated tasks; the 43rd performed little to no small unit maneuver training.

Training consisted of range firing, marches in the hills, and other business of *basic* training, less than six months before actual combat. There is little evidence that the 43rd had sufficient opportunity to conduct small unit combat training, the type of training they would need to fire and maneuver effectively in the jungle as squads, platoons, and companies.

The 43rd was not alone in their lack of proper training or lack of gradual introduction to combat. The War Department sent four National Guard divisions to the South Pacific during this time period: the 43rd, 37th, 32nd, and 41st.<sup>98</sup> The experiences of these division were a great deal alike.

In the fall of 1942, the 32nd Division was experiencing on New Guinea what the 43rd would experience on New Georgia eight months later. Having failed to conduct proper training and having been thrust into a major jungle offensive, they ground to a halt. Their Corps Commander, Lieutenant General Eichelberger, was sent to investigate the stall, "Eichelberger reached the 32nd Division command post and assumed command on 30 November [1942]. . . . He never forgot the site that greeted him-no front line discipline; no thought of going forward; men loitering about in rear areas, many without permission."<sup>99</sup>

Later, The 37th would experience problems similar to those of the 32nd and the 43rd as they fought to reinforce the 43rd on New Georgia. Lieutenant Colonel Hobart Mikesell, 37th Division Surgeon notes in his after-action report, "We had many N. P. cases. . . . I saw one whole platoon of an infantry company go out because the platoon sergeant went 'wacky' and he carried 30 men with him."<sup>100</sup>

The factors resulting in the problems on New Guinea were the same at work on New Georgia a few months later. While the National Guard Divisions certainly did not consist of inferior men, their methods of recruitment and training, their lack of experience to even spot incompetence, and their garrison duties while enroute to combat resulted in traumatic first battle experiences for three of the four divisions sent to the South Pacific early in the war. The fourth

(41st) received the benefit of nothing more than good timing, as most of their operations consisted of "mopping up" and occupation duties.<sup>101</sup> Mass produced and thrust into the breach as quickly as possible, the performance of these divisions in their first combat is not surprising.

The efficacy of unit comparisons is a debatable proposition. The greater the variables between units (nationality or culture, preparedness, training, size, organizational structure, equipment, leadership, etc.) the less reliable and valid are conclusions drawn from comparisons. Regardless of its similarities with other American units, the 43rd was in fact the only Army division with its background to fight the Japanese on New Georgia in the opening punches. Still, the similarities with other American units with comparable backgrounds and placed in comparable circumstances are, if not striking, at least well worth noting.

The neuropsychiatric casualties of the 43rd were, by circumstance, inexperienced troops and replacements thrust into their first combat. Not surprisingly, this result was a truism in the Army as a whole, with the other end of the neuropsychiatric spectrum inhabited by veterans of four to six uninterrupted months of combat,<sup>102</sup> a condition that would come to be known as "old sergeant's syndrome."<sup>103</sup> Another favorable comparison is available in the 28th Division, which broke down in the Huertgen Forest in 1944. Changes in organization and leadership, great personnel turbulence, and relief of their commanding general in their first combat, are reflective of the 43rd, but there the comparison ends.<sup>104</sup> The 28th was fighting a different enemy, on a different continent, and too much parallel comparison does violence to the details of each separate case. Is it possible to draw more than very general conclusions from comparisons of different units? Is the fact that the 6th Marine Division, during the battle of Okinawa, suffered 2,662 wounded and 1,289 neuropsychiatric casualties<sup>105</sup> relevant? Such comparisons are valuable only in that they illustrate that what happened to the 43rd in World War II was a far cry from the exception.

At the time of their move from New Caledonia to Guadalcanal, the 43rd was operating almost exclusively as three regimental combat teams (RCTs), formed around their three infantry regiments, the 103rd, 169th, and 172nd. Divisional support troops (artillery, engineers, medical, signal, etc.) were taken from their parent battalions or companies and assigned to work directly for one of the three regiments. Accordingly, the 103rd RCT was the first to depart Noumea for Guadalcanal, arriving 17 February 1943. The 172nd RCT remained at Espiritu Santo, and the 169th RCT departed Noumea on 16 February, arriving at Guadalcanal on 20 February 1943. Enroute, the 169th's convoy of four transports was attacked by Japanese dive-bombers, six of which were shot down with no damage to the ships. A final convoy of four transports brought the remaining division troops from Noumea, arriving on Guadalcanal 28 February 1943.<sup>106</sup>

Even before the entire division had closed on Guadalcanal, orders were received assigning the 43rd to the newly formed Task Force 31, whose initial task was to seize and occupy the Russell Islands, some forty miles northwest of Guadalcanal. The Russells were to be the major outpost guarding the western flank of Allied forces operating in the Solomons. Accordingly, the 43rd (minus the 172nd RCT, which remained at Espiritu Santo) moved to the Russells, closing on 13 March 1943.<sup>107</sup>

Landings at both Guadalcanal and the Russells were unopposed, the Japanese having evacuated both islands in the few weeks preceding the landings. The 43rd wasted no time on Guadalcanal. The Japanese promptly bombed and strafed the 103rd's area, causing little damage other than loss of sleep and no casualties. More significantly, the men of the 43rd took a good look around. In his *History of the 43rd Infantry Division, 1941-1945*, 43rd veteran Colonel Joseph E Zimmer notes, "Naturally the scenes of battle just completed were of great interest: everyone was anxious to discover as much as possible about jungle combat. Many men spent hours talking to veterans of other Army units who had fought the Japanese on Guadalcanal."<sup>108</sup> This reconnaissance was necessary and proper, but it also gave 43rd soldiers more time to think,

more time to build up the Japanese soldier into a boogeyman with magical powers, and more time for rumor to feed upon rumor. Military psychiatrists note as a precipitating factor for neuropsychiatric casualties, “‘Snow jobs’ or tall tales told often by the veteran combat soldier to the new replacement at, or before, a critical time.”<sup>109</sup>

Landings on the Russells went badly. Zimmer remembers, “This was the first landing of its kind by the inexperienced troops of the 43rd, and many blunders were made that might have proved costly if the enemy had elected to defend.”<sup>110</sup> Two years after the 43rd was federalized, the level of training remained unsatisfactory. Construction, reorganization, and movement had kept the 43rd from conducting enough combat training. One cannot help but be saddened and frustrated reading the *43rd History*. They try so hard to train, but are continually distracted. Even after the poor landing on the Russells, one reads, “From this time until the movement of the division for future operations, an intensive program of jungle and amphibious training was pursued and operating with associated units the repair, maintenance and construction of roads, dock facilities, etc. The details of general operations as an Island Group may be found in the history of the Acting Island Command, Russell Islands, the staff of the 43rd Division serving also as an Island Command by virtue of Major General Hester’s being senior Army officer present.”<sup>111</sup>

Training in cohesive units went by the wayside as men from every small unit were drained away to see to the infrastructure of the Russells. From the diary of one soldier in the 43rd, dated 3 March 1943, “Policed up the coconuts in our area. The coconut grove looks like a park now, but this ‘policing up’ all over the So. Pacific is getting to be a pain in the neck.”<sup>112</sup> The Japanese attacked the Russells several times by air after the 43rd had invested the islands, but casualties were light, and the Army Air Corps and Navy fliers did the lion’s share of the fighting in the areas around the Russells.<sup>113</sup> The 43rd did not know it, but their days as spectators and road builders were numbered. Their next major event would be pure combat.

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<sup>1</sup>*The New York Times*, 24 February 1941.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Department of the Army, *Official History of the 43rd Infantry Division, World War II*, iii, Combined Arms Research Library, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, file no. N-11798. (Hereafter cited as *Official History of the 43rd Infantry Division*).

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Colonel (retired) Howard F. Brown, 43rd Infantry Division, Greenwich, RI, letter to the author, Leavenworth, KS, 12 October 1998.

<sup>6</sup>Colonel (retired) John J. Higgins, 43rd Infantry Division, Avon, CT, letter to the author, Leavenworth, KS, 30 October 1998.

<sup>7</sup>Robert R. Palmer et al., *US Army in World War II: The Army Ground Forces*, vol. 2, *Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1948), 433.

<sup>8</sup>Mark S. Watson, *US Army in World War II: The War Department*, vol. 2, *Chief of Staff: Prewar Plans and Preparations* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1950), , 106-7 and 116-117.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 148-9.

<sup>10</sup>*Official History of the 43rd Infantry Division*, 7.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Brown.

<sup>13</sup>Colonel (retired) Joseph E. Zimmer, *The History of the 43rd Infantry Division, 1941-1945* (Nashville: The Battery Press, 1945), 9-10.

<sup>14</sup>*Winged Victory: 43rd Infantry Division, 1941-1945*, 8-9. Combined Arms Research Library, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 940.541273.W769.c.1.

<sup>15</sup>Palmer, 171.

<sup>16</sup>*Official History of the 43rd Infantry Division*, 9.

<sup>17</sup>Brown.

<sup>18</sup>General Charles C. Krulak, "Transformation and Cohesion," *Marine Corps Gazette*, November 1996, 21-23. The United States Marine Corps has long been recognized as the institution that best knows how to turn a civilian into a fighting man. In this article, the commandant speaks of the requirements not only to recruit the right youngsters, but also to put them through training designed to make the Marine Corps theirs. "Recruit training has been

lengthened to accommodate an event we are calling 'The Crucible.' The crucible will be the defining moment in a young Marine's life. In 54 hours of intense, physically demanding training, under conditions of sleep and food deprivation, recruits will be forged in the furnace of shared hardship and tough training that has always been the trademark of Marine recruit training."

<sup>19</sup>David W. Johnson and Frank P. Johnson, *Joining Together: Group Theory and Group Skills* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1997), 12.

<sup>20</sup>Edward A Shils and Maurice Janowitz, "Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 12, (Summer 1948): 280-315.

<sup>21</sup>Richard Holmes, *Acts of War: The Behavior of Men in Battle* (New York: The Free Press, 1985), 80.

<sup>22</sup>Colonel William S. Mullins, *Neuropsychiatry in World War II* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1973), vol. 2, *Overseas Theaters*, 995.

<sup>23</sup>Francis C. Steckel, "Morale and Men: A Study of the American Soldier in World War II" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1990), 304.

<sup>24</sup>Palmer, 549.

<sup>25</sup>Samuel Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), vol. 2, *Combat and Its Aftermath*, 130-31.

<sup>26</sup>Colonel (retired) Van R. Mayhall, 31st Infantry Division, Baton Rouge, LA, letter to the author, Leavenworth, KS, 20 September 1998.

<sup>27</sup>Watson, 204.

<sup>28</sup>*Official History of the 43rd Infantry Division*, 8.

<sup>29</sup>Mayhall.

<sup>30</sup>*Official History of the 43rd Infantry Division*, 9.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>32</sup>Bill Mauldin, *Bill Mauldin's Army* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1983), 90.

<sup>33</sup>Watson, 309.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 236-37.

<sup>35</sup>Mayhall.

<sup>36</sup>Colonel (retired) Edgar N. Jaynes, 43rd Infantry Division, Fairmont, WV, letter to the author, Leavenworth, KS, 12 October 1998.

<sup>37</sup>Chief Warrant Officer Four (retired) Richard F. Potter, 43rd Infantry Division, Woodstock, CT, letter to the author, Leavenworth, KS, 15 October 1998.

<sup>38</sup>Maurice Matloff, "The 90 Division Gamble," in *Command Decisions*, ed. K. R. Greenfield (Washington, DC: GPO, 1960), 365.

<sup>39</sup>Kreidberg, 555.

<sup>40</sup>Christopher R. Gabel, *The US Army GHQ Maneuvers of 1941* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1991), 117.

<sup>41</sup>Anthony Kellett, "The Soldier in Battle: Motivational and Behavioral Aspects of the Combat Experience," in *Psychological Dimensions of War*, ed. Betty Glad, (London, England: Sage Publications, 1990), 217.

<sup>42</sup>R. Manning Ancell, *The Biographical Dictionary of World War II General and Flag Officers of the US Armed Forces* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 147.

<sup>43</sup>Brown.

<sup>44</sup>Jaynes.

<sup>45</sup>Lieutenant General Leslie J. McNair to General Marshall, "High Commanders," memo, 7 October 1941, Box 76, Folder 31, Correspondence, George Catlett Marshall Library, Virginia Military Institute.

<sup>46</sup>Watson, 239-240.

<sup>47</sup>Mayhall.

<sup>48</sup>*Official History of the 43rd Infantry Division*, 10.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Mayhall.

<sup>51</sup>Eli Ginzberg et al., *The Ineffective Soldier: Lessons for Management and the Nation*, vol. 1, *The Lost Divisions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 16-20. "During the period 1941-1945 the Army alone returned to civilian life more than 2.5 million men. This figure does not include men demobilized in 1945 on 'point scores,' and of course does not include soldiers killed or missing in action. . . . The majority, about 1.5 million, were those whose performance was so questionable that the Army believed it could gain by releasing them and if possible replacing them with better men."

<sup>52</sup>Palmer, 92.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Ginzberg, 25.

<sup>55</sup>Kreidberg, 604-5.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 579.

<sup>57</sup>Watson, 366.

<sup>58</sup>*Official History of the 43rd Infantry Division*, 11.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 11-12.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 12.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Palmer, 433.

<sup>63</sup>US Army, "Study of Army Ground Forces Battle Casualties" (Washington, DC: Headquarters Army Ground Forces Plans Section, 1946), 14. Report in possession of Dr. Roger J. Spiller, Ft. Leavenworth, KS.

<sup>64</sup>*Official History of the 43rd Infantry Division*, 12-15.

<sup>65</sup>Gaius Petronius Arbitr, *Leadership: Quotations from the Military Tradition*, ed. Robert A. Fitton (Oxford: Westview Press, 1990), 41.

<sup>66</sup>*Official History of the 43rd Infantry Division*, 12.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 16-17.

<sup>68</sup>Higgins.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>70</sup>*Official History of the 43rd Infantry Division*, 18.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>Colonel (retired) John J. Higgins, "First Connecticut History," 1 March 1963, 12-16, unpublished manuscript in possession of the author. The 169th can trace its History back to 11 October 1739, when it was brought into being by His majesty's General Assembly in Connecticut. Shortly thereafter the 169th saw its first action in the French and Indian Wars.

<sup>73</sup>Palmer, 19.

<sup>74</sup>*Official History of the 43rd Infantry Division*, 18.

- <sup>75</sup>Potter.
- <sup>76</sup>Jaynes.
- <sup>77</sup>*Official History of the 43rd Infantry Division*, 18.
- <sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.
- <sup>79</sup>Potter.
- <sup>80</sup>Brown.
- <sup>81</sup>*Official History of the 43rd Infantry Division*, 19.
- <sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*, 18.
- <sup>83</sup>Morton, 327-328.
- <sup>84</sup>David Doubilet, "Wreck of the *Coolidge*," *National Geographic*, 173, no. 4 (April 1988): 458-467.
- <sup>85</sup>Jaynes.
- <sup>86</sup>Robert M. Browning, Jr., *US Merchant Vessel War Casualties of World War II* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1996), 237.
- <sup>87</sup>Doubilet, 465.
- <sup>88</sup>Sergeant Mack Morriss, "A Story of American Courage," *Yank*, 1, no. 49 (28 May 1945): 5-6.
- <sup>89</sup>*Official History of the 43rd Infantry Division*, 20.
- <sup>90</sup>Brown.
- <sup>91</sup>*Official History of the 43rd Infantry Division*, 20.
- <sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>93</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>94</sup>John Miller, Jr., *US Army in World War II: The War in the Pacific*, vol. 8, *CARTWHEEL, The Reduction of Rabaul* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1959), 72.
- <sup>95</sup>*Official History of the 43rd Infantry Division*, 21.
- <sup>96</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup>Higgins.

<sup>98</sup>Eric Bergerud, *Touched With Fire: The Land War in the South Pacific* (New York: Penguin, 1996), 210.

<sup>99</sup>Jay Luuvas, "Buna, 19 November 1942-2 January 1943: A 'Leavenworth Nightmare,'" in *America's First Battles, 1776-1965*, Charles H. Heller and William A. Stofft, eds. (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1986), 211.

<sup>100</sup>Lieutenant Colonel Hobart Mikesell, 37th Infantry Division Surgeon, "Report of Medical Department Activities in New Georgia and Guadalcanal," 7 December 1943. Combined Arms Research Library, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 9, file no. C-2368.

<sup>101</sup>Bergerud, 208-212.

<sup>102</sup>Steckel, 288.

<sup>103</sup>Mullins, 132.

<sup>104</sup>Major Thomas M. McGinnis, "Unit Collapse: A Historical Analysis of Two Divisional Battles in 1918 and 1944" (MMAS thesis, US Army Command & General Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 1987), 60-3.

<sup>105</sup>Major Paul Laski, "Battlefield Stress: Adequacy of US Army Doctrine" (MMAS thesis, US Army Command & General Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 1980), 3.

<sup>106</sup>*Official History of the 43rd Infantry Division*, 22-23.

<sup>107</sup>*Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>108</sup>Zimmer, 18-19.

<sup>109</sup>Mullins, 481.

<sup>110</sup>Zimmer, 19.

<sup>111</sup>*Official History of the 43rd Infantry Division*, 24.

<sup>112</sup>Robert E. Casco, "Diary Telling of Wartime in the South Pacific Battle for Munda in the Northern Solomons Campaign-February to December 1943--Company H, 169th Infantry," 2. Unpublished manuscript in possession of the author.

<sup>113</sup>*Official History of the 43rd Infantry Division*, 23.

## CHAPTER 3

### STRATEGY AND COMBAT

Encouraged by their victory at Midway (3 to 5 June 1942), the Allies planned to seize and maintain the offensive in the South Pacific. This decision led to the American occupation of Guadalcanal, a bloody affair in which US Marines found themselves isolated, ill supplied, and unprepared for the vigorous Japanese counterattack which was to follow. Hanging on by their fingernails, the Americans fought on at Guadalcanal and won the island outright by 15 November 1942. They then looked for ways to maintain the initiative in the Solomons and elsewhere in the South Pacific.<sup>1</sup>

In January 1943, President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill determined strategic objectives for the year at the Casablanca Conference. Among these objectives was the seizure of Rabaul, on New Britain Island, in the South Pacific. Rabaul would give the Allies a major airfield to cover their island hopping campaigns, while removing the same advantage from the Japanese. The capture of Rabaul, in conjunction with continuing operations in New Guinea and Burma, would put the offensive firmly in Allied hands.

Details of the seizure of Rabaul were left to the Joint Chiefs, who asked General Douglas MacArthur to develop a plan. MacArthur's staff promptly produced the ELKTON plan, which simply put was a double envelopment of Rabaul through two pincers, New Guinea and the Solomons. No one questioned the strategy of MacArthur's plan. The problem was one of assets. Among other things, MacArthur was asking for five additional divisions to accomplish the task. After much debate, the Joint Chiefs determined they could provide only two additional divisions, and thus scaled down or postponed many of the objectives described in the ELKTON plan. Among the objectives postponed was the capture of New Georgia Island in the Solomons and with it Munda Airfield. Resulting revisions to ELKTON emerged as ELKTON III, code-named CARTWHEEL, (figure 4). Under this new plan, the Americans would take the New Georgia

Island area in July 1943.<sup>2</sup> By that time, the plan to seize New Georgia itself would be aptly codenamed TOENAILS (figure 5).

As always with tactical plans, they read very simply and clinically on paper. From the Army's official history:

The general plan of maneuver called for assault troops from Guadalcanal and the Russells to move to Rendova, Segi Point, Wickham Anchorage and Viru Harbor. . . . Segi, Wickham, and Viru would be taken by small forces to secure the line of communications to Rendova while the main body of ground forces captured Rendova. Artillery on Rendova and the barrier islands was to bombard Munda, an activity in which ships' gunfire would also be employed. On several days following D-Day, slow vessels such as LSTs and LCTs would bring in more troops and supplies . . . about D plus 4, when enough men and supplies would be on hand, landing craft were to ferry assault troops from Rendova across Roviana Lagoon to New Georgia to begin the march against Munda.<sup>3</sup>

The command structure to support the New Georgia Operation was complicated. The Army was a stranger to joint operations and adding the huge egos of General Douglas MacArthur and Admiral William Halsey into the mix did not simplify matters. Traditional Army-Navy rivalry played its part, as did inexperience in employment of air assets.

American command relationships in the Pacific were managed by area rather than unit. As units moved from one area to another they could find themselves under the command of any one of a number of superior headquarters. The significance for the 43rd of this general command complexity found its expression in a simple question: For whom does Major General Hester work?

Technically, Hester's 43rd Division fell under XIV Corps, commanded by Major General Oscar W. Griswold, who in turn answered to Lieutenant General Millard F. Harmon, commander of all ground (Army and Army Air Corps) forces in the South Pacific. In early 1943, Harmon controlled the 25th, 37th, 43rd, and Americal Divisions, as well as the Thirteenth Air Force. However, as TOENAILS was a joint as well as combined operation, involving US Army, Navy,

and Marine as well as Allied forces, responsibility for the command structure defaulted to Admiral Halsey, Commander of the South Pacific (COMSOPAC). (General MacArthur at this time was Commander, Southwest Pacific.)<sup>4</sup>

Halsey turned to Rear Admiral Richmond K. Turner to create and command a task force for TOENAILS, designated Task Force 31. The 43rd, as the centerpiece of the task force, was designated as the planning and execution headquarters for what was called the New Georgia Occupation Force (NGOF, figure 6). Hester, who had last seen combat in the 1916 Punitive Expedition into Mexico, would command not only his division but a conglomeration of Navy, Marine, and Allied forces as well. In his book *The Munda Trail*, Eric Hammel notes that General Harmon was “volubly dubious,” about these command arrangements and that General Griswold, as Hester’s corps commander, was to be prepared to assume command of the operation.<sup>5</sup>

The higher level commanders identified a command problem, but did little to remedy it. They realized they were asking a great deal of Hester and his small division staff, yet they decided that Griswold and his XIV Corps staff would remain on Guadalcanal to see what would happen. See they would. The “they” in this case represents a conglomeration of general and flag officers that included Griswold, Harmon, Turner, and Halsey.<sup>6</sup>

Having received the orders for the seizure of New Georgia, General Hester and his staff immediately began planning and reconnaissance for the mission. Hester gave his Assistant Division Commander Brigadier General Leonard F. Wing the responsibility for planning the operation. Planning was well under way by the end of May, and on 13 June 1943, the 43rd launched a reconnaissance party to Rendova Island, which had been identified as the foothold and location for the artillery and division headquarters in the upcoming operation. Aided by native scouts, the reconnaissance party returned twelve days later with detailed information on the area with which to finalize planning.<sup>7</sup>

Admiral Turner had decided he wished to attack New Georgia with two simultaneous landings, the Western Force (main effort) oriented on Rendova, and Munda Airfield, and the Eastern Force (supporting effort) on Segi Point, Viru Harbor, Wickham Anchorage, and Vura (figure 5). Turner himself would command the Western Task Force, although General Hester remained commander of all ground forces. On orders from Admiral Halsey, Hester would assume command of all naval and air forces as well. Once again the unwieldy command and control architecture comes to the fore. The Army account of the CARTWHEEL Campaign states:

The organization of the South Pacific, as set forth on paper, seems complicated and unwieldy. Perhaps it could have functioned awkwardly, but the personalities and senior commanders were such that they made it work. There is ample testimony in various reports to attest to the high regard in which the aggressive, forceful Halsey and his subordinates held one another, and events showed that the South Pacific was able to plan and conduct offensive operations involving units from all Allied armed services with skill and success.<sup>8</sup>

Shakespeare would no doubt term this protesting too much. Why should commanders have to *make* this dubious chain of command work? A simple, unified chain of command would seem to be a better starting point.

Despite the convoluted chain of command, the 43rd staff completed final preparations and planning, and task-organized units between the two landing forces. Of the 43rd's troops, the Western Force contained the division headquarters, division artillery headquarters, the 172nd (having recently moved from Espiritu Santo to Guadalcanal), and the 169th. The Eastern Force contained the 103rd and the 4th Marine Raider Regiments. Artillery and other assets were task organized to support the infantry regiments.<sup>9</sup> Admiral Turner also designated two battalions of the 37th Division and one battalion of the 1st Marine Raider Regiment as the NGOF Northern Landing Force, with the tasks to land on the north side of New Georgia and take Bairoko. The purpose of the Northern Landing Force was to prevent Japanese reinforcement and resupply from Kolombangara and other islands.

While the leadership of the 43rd was planning and task organizing for the upcoming battle on New Georgia, the troops trained, watched Japanese and American dogfights, ducked the occasional bombs, and tried to prepare themselves as best they could. The supply lines to the Russells were tenuous and rations were small. At one point the troopers slaughtered cattle left behind on the islands by coconut plantation owners and enjoyed some fresh beef with their coconuts.<sup>10</sup> They fought the rain, the 100-degree heat, the jungle, and malaria, but they also got a few movies and some leisure time to swim and relax. In May of 1943, the soldiers

were issued the so-called jungle uniform for use prior to and after the landing on New Georgia. . . . The US Army could not have issued a worse uniform for jungle warfare. Soldiers really suffered from this uniform which consisted of a full length coverall impregnated with camouflage painted design. This heavy impregnation made it impossible to have air pass through the material . . . . Also issued were 12" rubber and canvas sneakers, heavy socks, a water proof rubber bag to fit into a canvas pack— the pack was to be loaded with about 50 lbs of equipment (mess kit, hammock, rations, extra rifle ammo, and in many cases one or two rounds of 60 or 81mm mortar rounds plus a poncho). In addition we had to carry a gas mask, cartridge belts and a steel helmet. As we landed on New Georgia the gas mask went first—thousands of masks and carrying cases were thrown away on New Georgia within hours. The coveralls were cut through the middle to allow the EM assistance in relieving themselves. The hammock was next to go after some men were told to tie them between two trees and as soon as live rounds were fired by snipers or infiltrators . . . . In our many discussions most GIs and many officers came up with the idea that when the uniform was tested in Panama jungles it must have been done by Jap testers as they could not have designed a worse uniform for jungle warfare. The bad effect of this uniform must have pushed some personnel over the edge during the first three weeks of tough combat and very tough conditions (heat, rain, malaria, dengue fever, etc).<sup>11</sup>

The original plan for the seizure of New Georgia called for a simultaneous attack by both Western and Eastern Task Forces on 30 June 1943. Enemy moves toward Segi Point, however, prompted Admiral Turner to launch elements of the 4th Marine Raiders and two companies of the 103rd RCT (43rd Division) to that area on 20 June. These forces seized Segi Point without serious opposition. Disturbed only by sporadic air attacks, Navy Seabees (military slang for "construction battalions," or CBs) constructed a fighter staging field there by 11 July. By 30 June, the Marines, along with an additional company of the 103rd RCT, had marched twelve miles overland to Viru Harbor and seized it as well.<sup>12</sup> The 2nd Battalion of the 103rd, along with

Marines, seized Vura on 30 June also. The Eastern Task Force had all but completed its mission in support of the seizure of Munda Airfield.

On 30 June 1943 (D-day) the Western Task Force of the New Georgia Occupation Force invested Rendova Island virtually unopposed. This is not to say that the landing was without its problems. Poor navigation, foul weather, and reefs conspired to make the landing somewhat disorderly. By the end of the day, however, the initial waves of the 169th and 172nd (43rd Division) RCTs, along with their supporting artillery, were ashore. These forces occupied a beachhead 1,000 yards deep, prepared for follow-on waves, and overwhelmed a surprised Japanese garrison of approximately 120 men. The Japanese lost about one-half of their number, with the Americans losing four killed and five wounded, including the 172nd's commander Colonel David Ross (wounded.) Ed Jaynes remembers, "When regimental headquarters landed . . . Colonel Ross sensed a problem. He took his orderly and several I & R [intelligence and reconnaissance] platoon and others and took off up a small hill and told me to get everyone off the beach and up to him. There were various bullets and ricochets. . . . The Japs were having breakfast and had not seen our ship. Colonel Ross and the rest killed about all of them. . . . Colonel Ross' orderly was killed and a number of GI's wounded."<sup>13</sup> The remaining enemy troops melted away into the jungle. The balance of Japanese resistance on D-day consisted of artillery fire from Japanese batteries on Munda Airfield and three air attacks, which succeeded only in damaging Admiral Turner's flagship the *McCawley*. (Later that evening the *McCawley* was accidentally torpedoed and sunk by American PT boats. Fortunately there was no loss of life.) General Harmon and Admiral Halsey both went ashore to observe D-day operations.<sup>14</sup>

All told, "Six thousand men of the 43rd Division, the 24th Naval Construction Battalion and other naval units, and the 9th Marine Defense Battalion had come ashore with weapons, rations, fuel, ammunition, construction equipment, and personal baggage. The Japanese had lost Rendova."<sup>15</sup> Over the next five days the remainder of the New Georgia Occupation Force landed

at Rendova, Segi Point, Viru, and Vura, until the entire force had arrived, with the main body concentrated at Rendova.

Supply problems appeared almost immediately. The rains turned the one road on Rendova to red ooze, almost swallowing a bulldozer and confounding the efforts of Seabees to improve road conditions with coconut logs. The logs just sank into the mud, as did rations, improperly marked medical supplies, as well as fuel and ammunition. General Hester had to ask Admiral Turner to hold additional resupply until the beachhead could be better organized.<sup>16</sup>

There were more than supply problems. The Division Surgeon's journal notes on 1 July 1943 that: "During the night there was a numerous [sic] rifle and automatic shooting to be heard possibly due to the fact that the men were under a nervous strain."<sup>17</sup> This shooting was the precursor to what Assistant Division Commander General Wing would in a few days call "promiscuous firing," a condition that has long been a prime indicator of frightened, poorly trained, and undisciplined soldiers. In his message sent to commanders on 10 July, Wing said, "Promiscuous night firing reflects deficiency in command and lack of discipline. Such firing must stop."<sup>18</sup>

With the nervous NGOF ill supplied but firmly in possession of Rendova, the reconnaissance-in-force for the movement to Zanana Beachhead on New Georgia Island proper could begin. Troops of the 169th and 172nd left Rendova on the first two days of July to complete the reconnaissance. At 2330 hours (1130 pm) on 2 July, 150 of the troops returned, inexplicably, to Rendova. When questioned they stated that "the coxswain of their landing craft had received a note dropped by a B-24 which ordered them to turn back." The Army official history notes, "There seem to be no further available data regarding this interesting but absurd excuse."<sup>19</sup> The phantom B-24 was most likely the creation of some very frightened soldiers and sailors in the lead landing craft, where the story originated.

While infantry elements of the 43rd struggled through reconnaissance of Zanana and the route to Munda Airfield (figure 7) in the first few days of July, the picture was much brighter for artillery and antiaircraft soldiers. Brigadier General Harold Barker, the Division Artillery Commander, was able to place his guns on Rendova and the barrier islands between Rendova and New Georgia in such a way that the artillery was able to cover the entire infantry approach from Zanana Beachhead to Munda Airfield. By the sixth of July fully six-plus batteries were in place and registered (105 and 155 millimeter).<sup>20</sup> General Barker later commented, "One of the most gratifying results of the New Georgia Campaign from the artilleryman's viewpoint was the confidence and enthusiasm displayed by our infantry for their artillery."<sup>21</sup> The 43rd Division Infantrymen, unfortunately, were not the only ones to appreciate the effectiveness of the artillerymen. Because Barker's guns were so accurately registered, they could lay artillery fire very close to friendly lines. When the American guns opened up the Japanese would often simultaneously fire their mortars into American positions, thus making the 43rd's soldiers believe their own artillery was hitting them. The Japanese would benefit from the confusion, damage to American confidence, and cease-fires. This is but one of many examples of Japanese skill at arms and appreciation of the psychological vulnerability of their enemy.<sup>22</sup>

Surprised by the occupation of New Georgia and unprepared to mount a ground counterattack, the Japanese response was initially limited to bombings of Rendova and its immediate vicinity. On the afternoon of 2 July the most effective of these raids killed twenty-three Seabees and scored a direct hit on the 43rd Division Casualty Clearing Station. Total losses (in addition to equipment) were sixty-five killed and eighty-five wounded.<sup>23</sup> Two days later, appropriately on the Fourth of July, American antiaircraft batteries and fighters had their revenge, shooting down all sixteen Japanese Betty bombers attempting to attack Rendova. A 43rd soldier, Robert Casco, in a wonderful display of word economy noted in his

diary "Plenty of fireworks this 4th of July."<sup>24</sup> The more poetic *43rd History* reported that "many of the planes wilted and fell like leaves."<sup>25</sup>

Reconnaissance had continued at Zanana, and the Assistant Division Commander, Brigadier General Wing, established the division command post in a 400-meter perimeter there. To this foothold came the balance of the 172nd and 169th Regiments, fully assembled at Zanana by 6 July.<sup>26</sup> Up to this time, elements of the 172nd had pushed 500 meters inland with no resistance. Indeed, there had been no organized resistance of any kind. The Japanese defenders of New Georgia had been shadowing the invader's patrols, hoping to gauge their strength and intentions.<sup>27</sup> Due to the lack of enemy activity General Hester decided to supply the entire drive to Munda Airfield through the Zanana Beachhead. With the division command post and two infantry regiments in place, as well as registered artillery ready to support, Hester ordered the five-mile drive on Munda to begin 6 July, from a line of departure just west of the eastern branch of the Barike River (figure 7).

The trouble began almost immediately. Zanana Beachhead was not much more than a coral outcropping, abutting dense jungle. The 43rd Division troops had to punch through this undergrowth to find the Munda Trail, a five-mile native footpath from Zanana to Munda Airfield. The Connecticut Historical Society reports soldiers' impressions of the trail: "Jungle growth was so dense that anyone who strayed from the trail vanished in a moment. Rain was constant and heavy. In the sun the jungle hissed. Nothing ever dried, and the mud, rotting plants, and stifling stillness left a dank odor drawn moist and warm with every breath. Frank Giliberto, a rifleman, likened the trail to a long, dark corridor. At the far end of the corridor were Japanese machine guns . . . on each side of the corridor were doorways, invisible in the dark, and in each doorway was a Japanese machine gun, waiting."<sup>28</sup> Into this Alice-in-Wonderland-gone-bad landscape charged First Lieutenant Ben Sportsman's F Company, 2nd Battalion, 172nd Infantry. They had advanced about 500 yards when the first Japanese mortar rounds began to fall among them. Fired

from the knee-mortar, a small, silent weapon, the rounds landed among the troops, fuses smoking, and exploded. A staff sergeant panicked first, running to the rear as fast as he could. Lieutenant Sportsman, fearing that the rest of his soldiers would panic as well, yelled at the top of his voice that he would shoot the next man who ran, and the panic subsided.<sup>29</sup> But the night was still to come. In the tropics, close to the equator, there is little twilight, little transition from day to night. Night comes quickly.

During that first night in combat the 43rd learned that they were in fact fighting not one, but three enemies; the jungle, the Japanese, and fear. Hammel notes in *Munda Trail*, "Late that night, a small group of Japanese soldiers crept to within a few yards of . . . the Connecticut riflemen . . . [shouting] that their training days were long over and that life would be much changed." The Japanese then proceeded to shout the name of one of the American company commanders, and then melted back into the jungle.<sup>30</sup> Speaking to the Connecticut Historical Society, 43rd soldiers remember:

At dark, with the Americans in their foxholes, the Japanese imitated bird and animal sounds, or methodically beat ivory sticks together. They called GIs by name, crawled to the edge of American foxholes, tossed grenades and lobbed rocks, freezing the terrified soldiers. "We couldn't talk, and we couldn't move for fear the creak of the knee joint would give us away. By morning we were frozen--we had to work each other's legs to get back the circulation," Giliberto, a Hartford native, said after the war. Almost nobody slept. The troops tossed rocks at anyone who snored. When migratory land crabs skittered into foxholes, the infantrymen thought a Japanese soldier had jumped in. The Americans stabbed at the dark with knives, injuring each other. "I know a lot of land crabs drew a lot of hand grenades and gunfire," said Larry Buckland, an infantryman from Bristol. "You'd be surprised how noisy a land crab can be when it's pitch black." . . . That first night, a few members of the 169th, frightened senseless, walked out of the jungle. In the next two weeks, many followed. Higgins [Colonel John J.] recalled a doctor assigned to one of the battalions: "The doctor went off his rocker. He stood up in his hole and started hollering, 'This is the doctor! You people have to leave us alone! We need our rest!' Someone finally hit him in the head." William Pintavalle of East Hartford remembered a less fortunate soldier. "We had a guy, big guy, from Wisconsin," he said. "They dragged him right out of the hole. The guy must have weighed 200 and something pounds and we found him the next morning. You had to sit on your guns or they'd' steal them from underneath you."<sup>31</sup>

The Division Surgeon's journal notes on 8 July that: "Most casualties are from bullets, machetes, and knives."<sup>32</sup> The same day, the following entry was made in the G-1 (Personnel) Log: "Radio to Comgen [commanding general] XIV Corps reference to Capt. Otto Rogers who may have left this station. He is believed to be a mental case and had no authority to leave."<sup>33</sup> Approximately ten days later there would be a similar entry, describing four lieutenants who had "evacuated themselves" and appointing an officer to investigate.<sup>34</sup>

While the Japanese were making life and death hell for the 43rd, Japanese commanders were recovering from surprise and resolving to hold New Georgia. The local commander Major General Noboru Sasaki was certain that the Americans were planning to take Munda and repositioned his forces to give a strong defense to the airfield there. Sasaki's superiors decided on 4 July to provide him with an additional 4,000 troops. These troops began to arrive on New Georgia from Kolombangara and other islands on 6 July.<sup>35</sup> The Japanese bypassed the block placed near Bairoko by the American Northern Landing Force, ensuring Japanese supply and reinforcement lines would remain open throughout the 43rd's drive on Munda.<sup>36</sup>

Western Landing Force operations were even less successful than the northern and were quickly grinding to a halt on the westward drive from Zanana to Munda. The 169th had finally broken through the Japanese roadblock between themselves and the line of departure west of the Barike River, but it had taken three days to do so. In the process the 169th had lost six men killed, thirty wounded, and one soldier diagnosed with "war neurosis."<sup>37</sup> Beginning from the line of departure at 0500 hours on 9 July, the 169th and 172nd Infantry Regiments began a coordinated attack on Munda Airfield, then only two and one-half miles away. Supported by General Barker's artillery, as well as fire from supporting Navy destroyers, the infantry did relatively little. At the completion of a ninety-minute artillery prep, the time for their movement (0630 hours) passed without much progress. Blocked by the twisting Barike, which crossed the Munda trail in three places, and harassed by snipers, at 1630 hours (4:30 pm) the 172nd had moved 1,100 yards (only

400 of these forward progress) and the 169th had made no progress at all. It was then time to dig in for another night.<sup>38</sup> The official Army account postulates that the failure of the 169th, facing the same obstacles as the 172nd, resulted from their rough handling by the Japanese during the previous night.

The night before the attack, 8-9 July, the 3rd Battalion [169th] was bivouacked near Bloody Hill. . . . When the Japanese made their presence known . . . or when the Americans thought there were Japanese within their bivouacs, there was a great deal of confusion, shooting, and stabbing. Some men knifed each other. Men threw grenades blindly in the dark. Some of the grenades hit trees, bounced back, and exploded among the Americans. Some soldiers fired round after round to little avail. In the morning no trace remained of Japanese dead or wounded. But there were American casualties; some had been stabbed to death, some wounded by knives. Many suffered grenade fragment wounds, and 50 percent of these were caused by fragments from American grenades. These were the men who had been harassed by Japanese nocturnal tactics on the two preceding nights, and there now appeared the first large number of cases diagnosed as neurosis. The regiment was to suffer seven hundred by 31 July.<sup>39</sup>

Thus continued the pattern that would be the hallmark of the drive on Munda: little to no daylight progress, night harassment by the Japanese, mounting neuropsychiatric casualties, mounting killed and wounded in action, and fratricide as 43rd soldiers fired, stabbed, and threw grenades at each other. The G-2 (Intelligence) Log for 10 July has this revealing entry, logged at 0630 hours: "Beach: [Zanana Beachhead] Japs sneaked in beach area, stabbing men. One was killed and an undetermined number wounded. Note: It was later reported that no Japs were in the area for a certainty, but that the men did the damage among themselves."<sup>40</sup> The next entry, thirty minutes later, reports that the 169th "had trouble among themselves. Quite a few casualties."<sup>41</sup> And again at 0930: "1st Bn 169th boys reported that the Japs used a kind of gas on them last night. It smelled like almonds and it made them groggy. They would then jump up in their holes and move around, giving the Japs a chance to inflict casualties."<sup>42</sup> Note the specific touch of *almond smell* in the tale, a detail perhaps added in the frantic attempt for authenticity.

In their first days on New Georgia, the 43rd, and particularly the 169th, failed to take even those rudimentary defensive procedures they would have to learn the hard way. The Army account reports:

Foxholes were more than six feet apart. The battalion [3/169th] laid no barbed wire or trip wire with hanging tin cans that rattled when struck by a man's foot or leg and warned of the approach of the enemy. Thus, when darkness fell and the Japanese began their night harassing tactics-moving around, shouting, and occasionally firing-the imaginations of the tired and inexperienced American soldiers began to work. They thought the Japanese were all around them, infiltrating their perimeter with ease . . . affected by weariness and the presence of the enemy, they apparently forgot their minds, the phosphorescence of the rotten logs became Japanese signals. The smell of the jungle became poison gas; some men reported that the Japanese were using a gas which when inhaled caused men to jump up in their foxholes. The slithering of the many land crabs was interpreted as the approaching Japanese. Men of the 169th are reported to have told each other that Japanese nocturnal raiders wore long black robes, and that some came with hooks and ropes to drag Americans from their foxholes. In consequence the men of the battalion spent their nights nervously and sleeplessly, and apparently violated orders by shooting indiscriminately at imaginary targets.<sup>43</sup>

The black robes, hooks and ropes, and special poison gas are reminiscent of childhood fears. All the myths of the netherworld of imagination were rising up to strike at the Americans.

Shakespeare's "undiscovered country" was malevolently attacking in the pitch-blackness.

The 300-page US Army *Field Service Regulations: Operations* (FM 100-5), published 22 May 1941, reveals about four and one-half pages on night combat. Within this tiny section one finds not one word on the defense.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, *The Infantry Journal's Infantry In Battle*, published in 1939, contains only the neat sketches and clean lines of World War I combat.<sup>45</sup> The 43rd was fighting a different kind of war for the American Army, one previously experienced only recently in New Guinea and on Guadalcanal.

Lack of experience was not the only factor at work in the 169th on 9 July. The problems went deeper than just bad terrain, Japanese snipers, and night harassment. Eric Hammel notes that "the crux of the difficulty lay in the minds of the men," and that "the fault lay largely with the officers, whose impossible inexperience prevented them from doing more than uttering some platitudes they clearly did not believe themselves. Morale and discipline were bound to suffer, and they had. They were confused and, as a result, a bit fearful. It rubbed off on their subordinates who were barely repressing their own feelings of hysteria."<sup>46</sup> In defense of the officers, Hammel

notes that lacking detailed maps, they were often disoriented, which contributed to their inability to effectively maneuver their men.

Here one can see the many psychological factors that combine to reduce individual soldiers to neuropsychiatric casualties, and units to ineffectiveness: isolation, disorientation, the unknown, frustration, wildly unfamiliar activities and surroundings, and the enemy conspire to produce palpable fear. Most readers will have experienced the stress and confusion of being lost in an unfamiliar city, a confusion that can easily turn to fear. Multiplied by scores, these were the feelings assaulting the men of the 43rd, men who were illtrained for this kind of combat and in many cases men who barely knew one another. A strange city is a bad place to be alone, so much more so combat. The individual results of this kind of stress and isolation are poignantly demonstrated in this account, also from Hammel, which deserves quotation at some length:

Private First Class Sam LaMagna, of F Company 169th, was approached by his squad leader and asked if he would share his foxhole that night with a man who was not settling down. . . . The two dug in well within the battalion perimeter and La Magna told the other soldier to remain calm and, above all, not to yell or make any other noise. La Magna admitted that he was scared, too, but that he knew enough to keep quiet. He showed the other man the .45 caliber pistol he kept in his right hand and the knife he kept in his left hand. Sometime later, LaMagna drifted off to sleep, the first he had had in days. Suddenly, his foxhole buddy was whispering in his ear, "Sam! Look! A Jap is trying to get in the hole!" La Magna looked up, startled, but saw only the canteen he had set on the lip of the hole. "Okay, Joe," La Magna whispered, "Where is he?" The other man pointed to the shadow of the canteen. La Magna pulled down the canteen. "There, Joe. See, it's only my canteen, Okay?" The other man grunted an acknowledgement. An hour later, La Magna felt something heavy on his left shoulder. He awoke with a start to find the two hand grenades he had placed on the lip of the hole. After checking the levers and pins to see that the missiles were safe, LaMagna gently prodded his sleeping companion and asked him if he had put the grenades on his shoulder. The other allowed as he had. "Why'd you do that?" LaMagna asked. The other stuttered out a story about not wanting them to fall into enemy hands. LaMagna realized that he was nearing the end of his patience. He did not want to scare Joe, or get him more upset, however, so he said in his calmest voice, "Look, Joe, everything's fine. See how nice and quiet it is? You don't have to worry about any Japs. Here, you go to sleep and I'll watch." The man calmed right down. "Okay Sam, but you be sure to wake me if you see or hear anything. Okay?" LaMagna agreed to do just that. Around midnight . . . La Magna noticed that his buddy was beginning to breath hard and shake in his sleep. LaMagna was about to touch the sleeping man, but he thought the better of it, fearing the other man might mistake him for a Japanese infiltrator. Before LaMagna could figure out what to do next, Joe shot up to a sitting position and began yelling, "You son of a bitch! I know you're out there! I can

even smell you!” As the half awake man continued to yell into the peaceful night, LaMagna gripped the pistol in his hand and swung it around into Joe’s mouth. Then he put the barrel of the pistol against the man’s head and muttered in a dead calm voice right into his ear, “You feel that, Joe?” There was a brief nod. “Well, if I hear you so much as breathe, I will blow your head off. You understand?” There was a brief nod. The yelling, which LaMagna had not stopped quite in time, set off other fearful men in the battalion perimeter. There were several shootings and more than a few stabbings as taut-nerved soldiers awoke suddenly and slashed wickedly at their buddies with the knives to which they so desperately clung in their sleep. There was some solace in the fact that these Connecticut National Guardsmen were finally learning to maim one another quietly.<sup>47</sup> [Joe would the next night go completely beserk, grab a sergeant’s .45 and shoot him in the chest before he would himself be shot and killed by another sergeant].<sup>48</sup>

The next morning, 10 July, while 360 neuropsychiatric casualties were evacuated to Guadalcanal, the 43rd renewed the advance with the 172nd actually covering some real ground. The 169th, however, ran into a Japanese platoon blocking the Munda Trail once again. Despite the 4,000 rounds of artillery that General Barker poured onto this blocking position, when the cannonade ceased, the Japanese stood to their guns and continued to halt the Americans, who gained only 1,500 yards that day.<sup>49</sup> The Japanese, true to form, would again ring up the curtain on the normal evening performance. Robert Casco, of H Company, 169th noted in his diary:

July 10 – What a hell last night [9 July] was. I didn’t get a bit of sleep. Jap harassing troops filtered into our area, tossed hand grenades, yelled and fired all night. Bourge was killed; Jabash was shot in the shoulder and Arbour got war-neurosis. Moved forward again today; stopped again in jungle and dug in for the night. And what a night! Guidry was cut up. McPherson got cuts on legs & arms. Perone’s nerves cracked. Two nights without sleep. “Chico” Estrada got killed. Mastronardi badly wounded. T. Jones cut up bad and Watkins cut up. C. Benoit wounded and Brandon got lip cut. Nugent cut in hands.<sup>50</sup>

By 11 July, as slow as progress had been, it had been fast enough to outrun the tenuous line moving supplies westward from Zanana Beachhead and casualties eastward. The 43rd’s engineers had done yeoman labor in constructing a jeep trail, but the jungle limited two-way traffic. Soon over half of the combat troops of the 169th and 172nd Infantry Regiments were reduced to hand-carrying ammunition and other supplies almost three miles from Zanana. General Hester decided to establish a beachhead closer to Munda, and to do so he ordered the

172nd to break off the attack and move directly south to establish a beachhead and open a supply line at Laiana<sup>51</sup>(figure 7).

On the map, the 172nd seemed the obvious choice for Laiana as they were closer to it. In reality, however, sending them south guaranteed a complete stall of the offensive, because the 169th, after three nights of the kind described above, was virtually ineffective as a fighting force. Men of the 169th wandered the Munda Trail in search of medical attention or solace, or they carried supplies, but at this point they were doing precious little fighting.<sup>52</sup> Fresh soldiers moving forward on the Munda Trail saw these shattered men, and in some cases refused to take one more step towards the fighting.<sup>53</sup> John Higgins remembers, "New soldiers were moved right up into their assigned unit and platoon areas without any chance to talk to their platoon leaders or other unit personnel. In some cases two replacements would be placed into a foxhole with minimum instructions." Higgins also notes that many of the new replacements had no infantry training at all; some were even washouts from the air cadet training program. He reports "a lot of them got killed."<sup>54</sup> After eighteen months of fighting in two theaters, the United States was running low on infantrymen.

The 172nd struck out for Laiana at 1000 hours on 11 July, leaving the 169th holding the proverbial bag, although they had no hands with which to hold it. Intense Japanese mortar fire slowed the 172nd. In order to keep the trail clear, American wounded were carried forward with the regiment, further hampering progress. Hammel notes that in some cases, twelve men would be "needed" to carry one stretcher through the rough terrain.<sup>55</sup> Dr. Roger Spiller, George C. Marshall Professor of Military History at the US Army Command and General Staff College, notes that when twelve men are carrying a stretcher their motives for doing so may not be simply the welfare of the casualty. They may very well be trying not to become casualties themselves.<sup>56</sup>

After "another bad night" (11 July) as Robert Casco of the 169th reported in his diary,<sup>57</sup> the 172nd resumed their march south to Laiana on the morning of 12 July. Although the regimental commander reported that his carrying parties now consumed three and one-half of his companies, the 172nd by late afternoon had made it to within 500 yards of the beach. There they were stopped by Japanese soldiers in coconut log pillboxes firing machine guns and mortars. They spent the night receiving enemy mortar fire and listening to the Japanese cut down trees to prepare open fields of fire for the next day's battle. Despite enemy preparations, however, the 172nd gained Laiana by the afternoon of 13 July. The following day they were joined there by the 3rd Battalion of the 103rd Infantry Regiment, landing amphibiously from Rendova and bringing with them supplies and fresh troops.<sup>58</sup>

The same day that the 172nd began its march south to Laiana (11 July), General Hester relieved the commander of the 169th, Colonel John D. Eason, replacing him with Colonel Temple G. Holland of the 37th Division. Holland immediately halted operations for a day to grasp the situation and plan an attack on the high ground northeast of Munda Airfield. The Japanese stubbornly held this position in mutually supporting pillboxes.<sup>59</sup>

The relief of Eason was among the first of many to come, both up and down the chain of command. Two days before his own relief, Eason had been ordered to relieve his 3rd Battalion commander by the 43rd Assistant Division Commander, General Wing. Reliefs of this kind had long been standard procedure for handling a unit that was making no progress. When General MacArthur had sent General Robert Eichelberger to Buna, New Guinea, to salvage a similarly stalled situation, he sent him with these words:

Bob, I'm putting you in command at Buna. . . . Remove all officers who won't fight. Relieve regimental and battalion commanders: if necessary put sergeants in charge of battalions and corporals in charge of companies-anyone who will fight. Time is of the essence. The Japs may land reinforcements any night. . . . I want you to take Buna, or not come back alive.<sup>60</sup>

Under Colonel Holland the 169th renewed their attack on 12 July and quickly ground to a halt. The World War I tactics they applied of rolling barrage and infantry charge were magnificently unsuited to jungle terrain. At the end of the day they had little to show but casualties, and another night to which to look forward. Robert Casco recorded in his diary:

July 12-Lost several men during last night and early this morning. Hogan and Cerino were killed. Roger Hedman, Jacobs, Bennett, Robertson, Elia, Rabalals & Herbert got neurosis. Jordan was wounded. K. Reed got broken thumb. Crocket also got war neurosis. In the afternoon we made an attempt at the enemy strongpoint facing us. Ran into heavy machine gun fire and mortar fire. Sgt. Deck was shell-shocked. Needham got neurosis. Babineaux accidentally shot himself in the leg. Morrison got a shrapnel wound in the back. We withdrew and set up bivouac for the night.<sup>61</sup>

In chapter 5 this study will revisit Casco's comments in detail. One should note here, however, the interchangeable use of the terms "shell shock" and "war neurosis," as well as the superficial and accidentally self-inflicted wounds he describes, not to mention the no fewer than ten soldiers, to include an NCO who "got" shell shock or war neurosis. The Division Surgeon's journal continued to note that the biggest percentage of casualties "seem to be knife wounds and neurosis cases of different forms."<sup>62</sup>

Renewing the attack on 13 July, the 169th gained some high ground and once again stalled against the Japanese defenders. The situation would change little over the next three days. By 14 July, reinforcements from the 145th Infantry Regiment, 37th Infantry Division, were committed to the Munda attack from Zanana. The situation on 15 July found the 169th with their 37th Division brethren still battering away at the Japanese on the high ground north of Munda Airfield, the Northern Landing Force still trying to take Bairoko, and the 172nd at Laiana in contact with the enemy between the Laiana Beachhead and Munda Airfield. By this time, some fifty to one hundred men were leaving the line as neuropsychiatric casualties daily.<sup>63</sup> Casco noted in his diary: "July 16-Had a rather peaceful night but this morning at dawn the Japs lobbed knee mortar shells into our area. One shell landed right in front of the foxholes. Five men killed and

nine injured. Several cases of shell shock and war neurosis. The 145th moved in this morning. We may be relieved soon. I hope so."<sup>64</sup> Casco is no longer noting individual names.

The reinforcing troops of the 37th Division had been ordered to New Georgia on 7 July from Guadalcanal, as the generals and admirals began to get nervous about the slow progress of the 43rd. Even earlier than this, problems in higher command had begun to surface, as predicted by General Harmon. Generals Harmon and Griswold, along with Admiral Turner, held court on Guadalcanal and came to the final realization that the operation was too much for General Hester. Turner felt that an augmentation by Griswold's XIV Corps staff would be enough to remedy the situation. Harmon, disagreeing, wanted to make it a XIV Corps operation, with Griswold as the corps commander in charge. Both men submitted their views to the decision maker, Admiral Halsey. (Harmon later related that the driving factor behind his recommendation was that he wanted Turner out of Army operations.) Halsey sided with Harmon, and ordered Griswold, with his XIV Corps staff to New Georgia. Further, Halsey planned to put Griswold in command of the New Georgia Occupation Force formally after the fall of Munda Airfield. Hester would revert to command of the 43rd only.

Upon arrival at Rendova on 11 July, Griswold immediately radioed Harmon, relating that "From an observer point of view, things are going badly," and that the 43rd division was "about to fold up."<sup>65</sup> He further recommended that the remainder of the 37th Division as well as the 25th Division be sent to New Georgia immediately to reinforce the 43rd. Within three days, and well before the capture of Munda on 5 August, Griswold was in command of the NGOF, Hester had reverted to the 43rd, Turner was transferred elsewhere, and orders from Halsey to Harmon and Griswold were to seize Munda and join forces with the Northern Landing Force at Bairoko as soon as possible.<sup>66</sup>

General Griswold spent from 16-25 July consolidating, reorganizing, resupplying, and providing proper medical care for the NGOF. Colonel Hallam, the XIV Corps Surgeon, arrived

on New Georgia on 14 July to find that the 43rd had suffered almost 100 killed and over 600 men wounded in action. Over 1,000 men had contracted dysentery, malaria, or skin fungus. Of greater significance to him were the neuropsychiatric casualties, which he termed alternately as suffering from *battle fatigue* or *war neurosis*. The distinction between the two conditions was important to Hallam, and will be discussed in detail in chapter five. The problem as he saw it was that men merely needing rest (battle fatigue) were evacuated through medical channels with those truly suffering from temporary psychoneurosis (war neurosis). What Hallam saw were men who:

Were the picture of utter exhaustion, face expressionless, knees sagging, body bent forward, arms slightly flexed and hanging loosely, hands and palms slightly cupped, marked course tremor of fingers . . . feet dragging, and an over all appearance of apathy and physical exhaustion. About 20% of the total group were highly excited, crying, wringing their hands, mumbling incoherently, an expression of utter fright or fear, trembling all over, startled at the least sound or unusual commotion, having the appearance of trying to escape impending disaster. Another 15% showed manifestations of the various types of true psychoneurotic complexes. The remaining 15% included the anxiety states, and those with various bizarre somatic disturbances. These were the individuals whose symptoms were of insidious onset, starting with insomnia, vague digestive symptoms, bad dreams, frequency of urination, irritability, diminished ability to concentrate, and a generally reduced efficiency in the performance of assigned duties. [Hallams believed the remaining 50% were sufferers of fatigue only].<sup>67</sup>

These were the men that John Higgins had been evacuating down the Munda Trail for days, "We had a lot of battle fatigue. . . . They just fell apart. . . . My particular solution, a guy would be shaking and crying; we put a stick in their hands to keep them from shaking."<sup>68</sup>

Hallam immediately set to work to rectify the situation. The first thing he did was to make a distinction for himself, commanders, and medical personnel between *combat fatigue* (a condition requiring rest, food, a shower, and clean uniforms) and *war neurosis* (an emotional condition requiring medical treatment). Hallam was working not only at a time when such distinctions were foggy (as they remain), but also when such terms and distinctions were being formulated. Every soldier complaining of war neurosis was screened by medical personnel to determine the nature and extent of their malady. To deal with the battle fatigue cases, he

established rest camps on the barrier islands. The sufferers of emotional problems were given medical treatment in addition to rest.<sup>69</sup> In his diary, Robert Casco notes the benefit of just one day in a rear area "July 24 – Moved from New Georgia to Rendova at 10:30 am. Got mail this afternoon. Took a bath and shaved and got new shoes and clothes. I feel like a new man now."<sup>70</sup> Casco himself had remained an effective soldier, nevertheless his diary readily reflects the positive effect of rest.

Lieutenant Colonel Jim Wells, commander of the 3rd Battalion, 103rd Infantry Regiment relates an incident in Eric Hammel's book *Munda Trail* that illuminates the power of battle fatigue:

After dispatching a precious squad of riflemen to help evacuate casualties to the beach [Laiana Beachhead] Wells noted that most of the squad failed to return. He decided to walk to the beach to find out why. The rain forest thinned out as this Regular Army officer—a West Point graduate—got nearer to the shore. Soon, Wells found himself walking through a number of manifestly secure rear-area encampments. At length, the battalion commander burst out of the trees and was confronted by a wide, clear, sunswept beach inhabited by a knot of frolicking swimmers. The effect was instantaneous and discomfiting. Lieutenant Colonel Wells had to force himself to continue walking. He felt an almost overpowering desire to strip off his filthy, reeking clothing and hurl himself into the warm, clear water; to hell with his duties, his rank, his career. There was no longer any question about what had become of the riflemen; they had succumbed to that sudden, overpowering urge to seek security; they had broken.<sup>71</sup>

Neither Wells nor Hammel mention it, but Wells may have later asked himself why he, the battalion commander, felt compelled to move to the rear in search of a squad rather than sending a subordinate.

There was still, however, a war on, a fact which Wells, as well as the new commander of the New Georgia Occupation Force, General Griswold, were keenly aware. Despite the Commander of the Northern Landing Force noting "goldbricking on the part of patrols who are inclined to keep fairly close to their camp area,"<sup>72</sup> aggressive action continued around Bairoko, but without much success. Farther south on the Munda Trail, Griswold's Corps offensive against Munda opened on 25 July with five regiments attacking abreast, the 103rd and 172nd of the 43rd

Division, and the 145th, 148th, and 161st of the 37th Division. (The 169th would join in the final push proper a few days later.) The going was not easy. Facing XIV Corps were three Japanese Infantry Battalions in heavily fortified positions. These positions were so well camouflaged that 43rd soldiers reported them easier to smell than see. The ubiquitous "tree snipers" of G. I. (Government Issue) folklore also spooked the Americans, although no one actually ever saw one. The battle for Munda Airfield raged on for ten more days, with Japanese mounting several credible counterattacks. At the small unit level the action consisted of stumbling upon a Japanese strongpoint, taking heavy casualties during a hasty withdrawal, and then resuming the attack with flame-throwers and any other weapons that could be brought to bear, a slow, costly, and nerve-wracking process. As the Americans gained experience in this vicious type of fighting, the pace of their advance quickened.<sup>73</sup>

Medical care was rapidly improving as well. Griswold had the 250 bed 17th Field Hospital moved from Guadalcanal to Rendova. Additionally, he requested and received new medical officers to replace those who had become casualties themselves (some neuropsychiatric). Colonel Hallam ensured that the true neurotics were separated from the men requiring rest only, and therefore a corps of experienced, rested soldiers began to return to the offensive.<sup>74</sup> Colonel Hallam's work is evident in the notations in the G-1log towards the end of July. There are numerous requests for information on casualties by type; and by 3 August the G-1 had "Received neurosis report from Med. Section covering period 30 June to 31 July inclusive."<sup>75</sup>

On 29 July, with the XIV Corps making real progress towards Munda, General Hester was relieved of command of the 43rd Division. Having nursed an ulcer throughout the campaign (he was eating baby food on the Russells), he was physically unable to continue.<sup>76</sup> General Harmon replaced Hester with Major General John R. Hodge, the new commander of the Americal Division. Hodge had seen combat on Guadalcanal as the assistant Division Commander of the 25th Infantry Division and was therefore one of the most experienced senior jungle fighters

available.<sup>77</sup> General Hester returned to the United States where he would command two more training centers and retire in 1946. Hester died in 1976 at the age of ninety.<sup>78</sup>

The XIV Corps continued to squeeze Munda Airfield. The Japanese, although by this time engaged in a general withdrawal, continued to hold strong points and harass the American rear areas. The Americans, having learned valuable lessons and growing in confidence, were overwhelming the Japanese. More and more individual acts of courage took place. On 5 August, General Wing radioed General Hodge, "Munda is yours at 1410 [2:10 pm] today." Between 29 July and this radio call, three Congressional Medals of Honor were earned by soldiers of the 43rd and 37th Divisions.<sup>79</sup> Two of these soldiers received their medals posthumously.

There was much left to do. The 43rd had to clear the remaining Japanese from New Georgia and the surrounding islands as well. The 25th, 37th and 43rd Divisions began the process of consolidating, reorganizing, securing gains, and the bloody business of taking and securing Vella LaVella, Arundel, and other islands.<sup>80</sup> Wishing to avoid "another slugging match," as he put it, Admiral Halsey decided to bypass the 9,000 Japanese troops on Kolombangara and hit Vella Lavella instead. Unfortunately, the bypassed troops, rather than dying on the vine, slipped away to Bougainville. The Japanese evacuation of Kolombangara effectively ended the battle for New Georgia, a battle that had cost 1,094 dead, 3,873 wounded, and a much greater number of non-battle casualties.<sup>81</sup>

After this savagery the 43rd was a worn-out division. General Hodge returned to his division on 11 August, briefly turning over command to General Barker, who on 20 August relinquished command to General Wing.<sup>82</sup> The bloody business of taking the additional islands was completed by the end of September, and the 43rd was assigned back to New Georgia to secure the island and Munda Airfield. The 43rd spent October 1943 to January 1944 tending to its security mission, receiving replacements, reorganizing, promoting, transferring, awarding medals, and training. They also buried their dead in the newly constructed cemetery on New Georgia, in

ceremonies that included the singing of "The Old Rugged Cross," and rifle volleys for the first soldier in each subordinate company to be killed. The 43rd also kindly fired volleys for the men of the 25th and 37th Divisions, as well as the Navy and Marine Corps.<sup>83</sup>

In the midst of these solemn offices the senior officers of the division were coming to grips with the fact that things had not gone well. They were looking for reasons why. The G-1 log notes as early as 11 August that the G-1 was requesting "percentage of casualties among the replacements as compared to our own trained men,"<sup>84</sup> ten days later the log reports the G-1 is "making a study of all casualties of Divn . . . to determine causes for various casualties within the Divn. such as neurosis, etc."<sup>85</sup>

In late January 1944, the 43rd moved back to New Zealand for rest, reorganization and additional training. Passing through Guadalcanal, the 43rd began arriving in Auckland on 18 February 1944.<sup>86</sup> June of 1944 found them back in action again in New Guinea. They would in January 1945 participate in the invasion of the Philippines and would end their World War II service participating in the occupation of Japan. In all of their operations after New Georgia they were successful, experiencing no greater neuropsychiatric casualties than any other division in theater.<sup>87</sup>

The character of the fighting on New Georgia had been absolutely savage, the hallmark of war in the South Pacific. At one point the Japanese stormed through the 169th Regimental Aid Station, overtaking the infantry platoon guarding it and killing the wounded.<sup>88</sup> They also attacked the 43rd Division Command Post. General Barker, the division artillery commander, was at that time in the command post. He had his 155-millimeter howitzers fire within sixty to seventy-five yards of the command post, repulsing the attack.<sup>89</sup>

Neither side was interested in taking prisoners. Some 169th soldiers remember: "Everybody in the 169th and the Japs was real bad because we would give no ground either way. . . . We didn't want to take them as prisoners and they, of course, they wouldn't take us as

prisoners.”<sup>90</sup> New Georgia had been a tough school and the Japanese ruthless teachers, but the 43rd had learned. Medical records indicate that fifty percent of the Americans killed in action died in the first two weeks of the campaign.<sup>91</sup> The Japanese were withdrawing and suffering casualties as well, but not that quickly and not that many early in the fight. The factors reducing American casualties were experience and a stanching of the flow of soldiers away from combat.

Writing from the relative safety of Rendova Island on 26 July 1943, Robert Casco makes these interesting observations:

I heard another report which concerns the night harassing we got on the Munda Trail. It seems that a special battalion of Japs was sent in to annihilate the 169th because we were a tough outfit. We got plenty of them, but never found their bodies because the live Japs carried them away. The Japs (Imperial Marines) did cause a lot of trouble, but they certainly ran into a lot of it themselves. A good many of them are now visiting their “honorable ancestors.” [Casco goes on to denigrate almost every aspect of Japanese operations while he lionizes the American Army and Navy for two more long paragraphs].<sup>92</sup>

One cannot help but think of a scared little boy who, on the morning after screaming to his father that there is a monster under the bed, is acting as if the event never took place and that he was not scared at all. Casco’s is the voice taunting the bully when he is well out of range, and his voice is echoed in the *43rd History*:

In fairness to all organizations and individuals, no one should be singled out for special mention here. Our troops, “green” to jungle combat, met and defeated the best that the Jap veteran could offer. Not without heart and back breaking labor, through virgin jungle and swamp, blood shed, lack of food and rest, to be true, but certainly upholding the tradition of American Armies before them. The jungle night harassing and weird Jap tactics intended to throw panic into the “soft” Americans were met and stalemated. Our advance was steady, locating the enemy many times only when his cleverly concealed automatic weapons barked in our faces and his defensive positions were within distances measured in feet.<sup>93</sup>

The author, unknown as he is, makes an apologist’s case, full of contradictions. The second person even creeps into his paragraph as if he were making a personal defense. Casco and the anonymous author of the *43rd History* have already begun to rearrange their memories, making minor adjustments and interpretations that would shed their division in the

best possible light. One is reminded of a passage in *Mutiny on the Bounty* (a work describing another type of cohesion) where witness testimony is analyzed, "The true facts were that he was so terrified throughout the whole of this time as to be ignorant of what he did, or said. . . . He arranged his recollections of what had taken place so as to put his own actions in the most favourable possible light."<sup>94</sup> This process should be recognizable to anyone who is honest with himself. It is a common everyday occurrence, not requiring combat.

History reports that the 43rd took Munda Airfield 5 August 1943. It reports resolve, courage, initiative, heroism, valor, and steadfast persistence. It also, however, reports 1,950 neuropsychiatric casualties in the 43rd, a fact that prompts further investigation into the causes of these casualties.

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<sup>1</sup>Louis Morton, *US Army in World War II: The War in the Pacific*, vol. 10, *Strategy and Command: The First Two Years* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1962), 274-284.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 380-402.

<sup>3</sup>John Miller, Jr., *US Army in World War II: The War in the Pacific*, vol. 8, *CARTWHEEL, The Reduction of Rabaul* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1959), 76-77.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 67-80.

<sup>5</sup>Eric Hammel, *Munda Trail: The New Georgia Campaign* (New York: Orion Books, 1989), 27.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup>Department of the Army, *Official History of the 43rd Infantry Division, World War II*, 36-37, Combined Arms Research Library, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, file no. N-11798. (Hereafter cited as *Official History of the 43rd Infantry Division*).

<sup>8</sup>Miller, 69-70.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 79-80.

<sup>10</sup>Colonel (retired) John J. Higgins, 43rd Infantry Division, Avon, CT, letter to the author, Leavenworth, KS, 28 October 1998.

<sup>11</sup>Higgins.

<sup>12</sup>Miller, 81-85.

<sup>13</sup>Colonel (retired) Edgar N. Jaynes, 43rd Infantry Division, Fairmont, WV, letter to the author, Leavenworth, KS, 12 October 1998.

<sup>14</sup>Miller, 88-90.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 90-91.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 90.

<sup>17</sup>43rd Infantry Division Surgeon's Journal, 1 November 1942 - 10 May 1943. National Archives file no. 343-26.1, 35.

<sup>18</sup>43rd Infantry Division G-3 Log, 10 July 1943. National Archives file no. 343-0.7, 2.

<sup>19</sup>Miller, 93.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 94.

<sup>21</sup>Brigadier General Harold R. Barker, "Artillery Operations of the New Georgia Campaign," *Field Artillery Journal* 34, no. 8 (August 1944): 531.

<sup>22</sup>Colonel (retired) Howard F. Brown, 43rd Infantry Division, Greenwich, RI, letter to the author, Leavenworth, KS, 12 October 1998.

<sup>23</sup>Hammel, 72-74.

<sup>24</sup>Robert E. Casco, "Diary Telling of Wartime in the South Pacific Battle for Munda in the Northern Solomons Campaign-February to December 1943-Company H, 169th Infantry," 4. Unpublished manuscript in possession of the author.

<sup>25</sup>*Official History of the 43rd Infantry Division*, 40.

<sup>26</sup>Miller, 94.

<sup>27</sup>Hammel, 85.

<sup>28</sup>Robert J. Conrad, "169th Infantry Regiment in World War II," *The Connecticut Historical Society Bulletin*, 60, nos. 1-2 (Winter-Spring 1995): 14.

<sup>29</sup>Hammel, 88-89.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 90.

<sup>31</sup>Conrad, 14-15.

<sup>32</sup>43rd Infantry Division Surgeon's Journal, 36.

<sup>33</sup>43rd Infantry Division G-1 Log, 8 July 1943. National Archives file no. 343-0.7, 1.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 19 July 1943, 1.

<sup>35</sup>Miller, 97-99.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 99-106.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 110.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 110-122.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 112-113. The 172nd was not subjected to the volume of night harassment experienced by the 169th, possibly accounting for their better performance on the 9 July attack.

<sup>40</sup>43rd Infantry Division G-2 Log. National Archives file no. 343-0.7, 15.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 16.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Miller, 108-9.

<sup>44</sup>US Army, Field Manual 100-5, *Field Service Regulations: Operations* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1941; reprint, GPO, 1992), 204-209 (page citation is to the reprint edition).

<sup>45</sup>US Army, *Infantry in Battle*, 2nd Edition, George C. Marshall, ed. (Washington, DC: The Infantry Journal, Inc., 1939), 355-63. (Reprint for the Center of Military History, GPO, 1996).

<sup>46</sup>Hammel, 97.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 98-99.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 102.

<sup>49</sup>Miller, 114.

<sup>50</sup>Casko, 5.

<sup>51</sup>Miller, 114-115.

<sup>52</sup>Hammel, 103.

<sup>53</sup>Higgins.

<sup>54</sup>Higgins.

<sup>55</sup>Hammel, 107.

<sup>56</sup>Dr. Roger J. Spiller, George C. Marshall Professor of Military History, US Army Command and General Staff College, interview by the author 5 November 1998, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, written notes in possession of the author.

<sup>57</sup>Casko, 5.

<sup>58</sup>Miller, 114-118.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 118.

<sup>60</sup>Jay Luuvas, "Buna, 19 November 1942-2 January 1943: A 'Leavenworth Nightmare,'" in *America's First Battles, 1776-1965*, Charles H. Heller and William A. Stofft, eds. (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1986), 211.

<sup>61</sup>Casko, 5.

<sup>62</sup>43rd Infantry Division Surgeon's Journal, 37.

<sup>63</sup>Miller, 199-120.

<sup>64</sup>Casko, 5.

<sup>65</sup>Miller, 124.

<sup>66</sup>Miller, 123-126.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 120-121.

<sup>68</sup>Higgins.

<sup>69</sup>Hammel, 154.

<sup>70</sup>Casko, 7.

<sup>71</sup>Hammel, 156.

<sup>72</sup>Miller, 128.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., 133-164.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 140.

<sup>75</sup>43rd Infantry Division G-1 Log, 9-19.

<sup>76</sup>Higgins.

<sup>77</sup>Miller, 149.

<sup>78</sup>R. Manning Ancell, *The Biographical Dictionary of World War II General and Flag Officers of the US Armed Forces* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 147.

<sup>79</sup>US Army Center of Military History, *Northern Solomons: The US Army Campaigns of World War II*, pamphlet (Washington, DC: GPO, 1990), 22-24.

<sup>80</sup>*Official History of the 43rd Infantry Division*, 42-44.

<sup>81</sup>US Army Center of Military History, *Northern Solomons: The US Army Campaigns of World War II*, pamphlet (Washington, DC: GPO, 1990), 24.

<sup>82</sup>*Official History of the 43rd Infantry Division*, 42.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, 25 and 31.

<sup>84</sup>43rd Infantry Division G-1 Log, 19.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>86</sup>Colonel (retired) Joseph E. Zimmer, *The History of the 43rd Infantry Division, 1941-1945* (Nashville, The Battery Press, 1945), 39-40

<sup>87</sup>*Ibid.*, 42-86.

<sup>88</sup>Higgins.

<sup>89</sup>Brown.

<sup>90</sup>Conrad, 22.

<sup>91</sup>Mary Ellen Condon-Rall and Albert E. Cowdrey, *US Army in World War II: The Technical Services, The Medical Department*, vol. 3, *Medical Service in the War Against Japan*, (Washington, DC: GPO, 1998), 184.

<sup>92</sup>Casko, 9.

<sup>93</sup>*Official History of the 43rd Infantry Division*, 41.

<sup>94</sup>Charles Nordhoff and James Norman Hall, *Mutiny on the Bounty* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1932), 315.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE JAPANESE ENEMY

Prior to the 43rd actually entering combat and suffering their 1,950 neuropsychiatric casualties, many of the factors that weakened their unit cohesion (personnel turnover, inconsistent training, inexperienced leadership) were working in concert to assure failure in their first weeks of fighting. Ironically, the one concept in which everyone was confident, his *image* of the Japanese enemy, also contributed to this failure. Paul Fussell in his excellent work on World War II behavior, *Wartime*, quotes Shakespeare's Earl of Warwick who observes, "Rumour doth double, like the voice and echo, the numbers of the feared."<sup>1</sup> Rumors of Japanese battle prowess and character would contribute considerably to the breakdown of the 43rd.

The vital factor in considering Japanese soldiers from the 43rd's point of view is not who the Japanese *actually* were, but who the Americans *thought* they were. In the prewar and early war years Americans alternately described the Japanese as insects, monkeys, bucktoothed-bespectacled buffoons, and supermen. Simultaneously and paradoxically subjects of scorn as well as awe, Japanese soldiers occupied a singular place in the minds of their American counterparts. This place was very near the unknown, every man's greatest fear. The US Army provided little help to the 43rd in this area, weakly stating in the *Soldiers Guide* of 1942, "To attempt an estimate of the Japanese Army is something like attempting to describe the other side of the moon, the side which is never turned toward us."<sup>2</sup>

Conversely, the American Army demonstrated an uncharacteristic largesse in fueling propaganda, myths, and misconceptions about the Japanese. Lying in their berths on transports or whiling away the hours in Auckland or New Caledonia, 43rd soldiers could flip through the pamphlet provided to them by the US Army, *A Pocket Guide to New Guinea and the Solomons*, for some conventional wisdom. The first page told them, "New Guinea and the Solomon Islands are of the greatest strategic importance to the United Nations. Everyone remembers only too well

the grim days when the Japs spread out like a swarm of locusts over the peaceful Philippines and East Indies toward Australia, and eastward into the Pacific Islands.”<sup>3</sup> The Japanese are locusts. They are mindless swarms of insects, relentlessly moving from country to country, devouring everything in their path. This image dovetailed nicely with years of American conditioning about the Japanese. Fueled by rumor, instinct, and propaganda the *image* of the Japanese soldier was bound to give 43rd soldiers pause. Discussing just such an animalistic image of the enemy, John Glenn Gray comments in *The Warriors* that, “Based as it is on ignorance and primitive dread, this image prevents those who hold it from any reasonable calculation of the enemy’s actual strength or weakness.”<sup>4</sup>

By the time the 43rd landed on New Georgia most Americans knew that the Japanese had spent years devouring China. Photographs of the 1938 bombing massacre in Chungking had been plastered all over newspapers as well as *Life* magazine. In the 1943 propaganda film *We’ve Never Been Licked*, starring Robert Mitchum, treacherous Japanese Naval Officers masquerade as foreign students at Texas A&M College to steal a vital chemical formula. In a scene describing their actions in China to their fellow students, the Japanese produce the pictures of Chungking and explain, “If sometimes it is necessary to choke the dog to give it medicine, it’s for the dog’s own good. . . . Here is a picture from a Japanese magazine, and because it is a picture of Chinese dead at Chungking after a Japanese bombing raid, most Americans would say it is only Japanese brutality. . . . Everyone who really understands Japan knows that every one of these people [the Chinese dead] has contributed, even if unknowingly, to the future greatness of Asia. But only under Japan can that greatness be achieved.”<sup>5</sup> One can hardly imagine a thought process more foreign to red blooded American boys. The “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” was a concept that found no sympathy in the American mind.

If any American doubted Japanese perfidy, he simply had to remember Pearl Harbor. If that was not sufficient he had the evidence of another 1943 picture, *Gung Ho*. In this cinematic

foray into the Pacific, wounded Japanese soldiers fake surrender and then kill American Marines rushing to their aid. They hide in coconut trees from which they shoot other American Marines in a most unsporting way. They also shoot wounded American Marines. Randolph Scott, the recruiting poster Marine Officer, refers to the Japanese as “those monkeys.”<sup>6</sup> The inference is one that evokes images of the malevolent flying monkeys in *The Wizard of Oz*. Filmmakers and other propagandists had apparently taken to heart the injunction of Harvard Professor Zechariah Chaffee, Jr., who in 1924 delivered a lecture entitled “The Conscription of Public Opinion,” in which he proclaimed, “After a war has begun, the effectiveness of propaganda is vastly increased. Indeed, it may be that, just as it is said to have been helpful to stupefy soldiers who were about to go over the top with ether in order that they might fight better, in the same way a nation cannot conduct the modern type of war which enlists civilians as well as soldiers if minds are allowed to operate freely.”<sup>7</sup>

The films were made in 1943 and were partly the result of Allied experiences with Japanese soldiers in the field, experiences that doubtless were shared with the soldiers of the 43rd. The Allies had hard evidence of Japanese cannibalism in New Guinea.<sup>8</sup> The context of the cannibalism may, however, have eluded the rumor mill. On New Guinea the Japanese were so short of supplies that they had begun to eat one another. Later in the war a Japanese commander had to issue orders instructing his soldiers that if they must eat humans to please eat the enemy.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps all that made it to the 43rd was, “The Japanese are cannibals.”

In addition to New Guinea, the bloody fight on Guadalcanal provided immediate information about Japanese savagery. An American Marine patrol, lured in by a Japanese flag of truce, had been brutally ambushed and hacked to pieces. The coda to this event from one of the survivors was that he had seen Japanese “swords flashing in the sun.” Including this account in his doctoral dissertation, Craig Cameron continues, “Although the facts were somewhat different, this was the ‘true’ account repeated in hundreds of squad messes.”<sup>10</sup> The final report on the

incident relates that the white flag was not one of truce but rather a signal flag employed to communicate with Japanese submarines off shore.<sup>11</sup> The actual facts in such instances are seldom important. The myths and the legends that they engender are more significant.

The 43rd soldiers heard these tales with sympathetic ears, ears that had been conditioned to hearing about the Japanese as subhumans with treachery as their only hallmark. To these soldiers the Japanese were completely alien. Soldiers in Europe were lucky. They were fighting white men who had the same Judeo-Christian background, the same myths, the same goals. The most important of these goals was survival. The Japanese, the Allies were learning, had no such earthly concern as survival. To die for his emperor was the greatest honor to which a Japanese soldier could aspire. This lack of the survival instinct made them a foe to be feared and despised. Additionally, they did indeed indulge in ruthless atrocities, to include phony-surrenders-turned-ambush and murder of prisoners or war. These actual events, fueled by rumor and exaggeration, became powerful, fear-inspiring narrative. Rather than understanding Japanese behavior as a function of their culture (which by no means excuses it), soldiers instead mythologized it, attributing the Japanese with inhuman traits. Fussell in *Wartime* quotes a Marine on Guadalcanal, "I wish we were fighting against Germans. They are human beings like us. . . . But the Japs are like animals. . . . They take to the jungle as if they had been bred there."<sup>12</sup>

An interesting twist to the American soldiers' image of his Japanese counterpart is that he viewed him at once as a ridiculous, bucktoothed, simian creature, and yet this subhuman was also a superman greatly to be feared. In his book about the Pacific War, *War Without Mercy*, John Dower reprints prewar and wartime cartoons that demonstrate the growing power of the Japanese soldier and notes, "An American radio broadcaster informed his audience early in the war that it was appropriate to regard the Japanese as monkeys for two reasons, first, the monkey in the zoo imitates his trainer; secondly, 'under his fur, he is still a savage little beast.'"<sup>13</sup> After the monkey had defeated the British in Malaya and had attacked Pearl Harbor, the rhetoric began to focus

more on the superhuman qualities of the Japanese. US Ambassador Joseph Grew, repatriated from Tokyo, described the Japanese using the terms sturdy, Spartan, clever, and dangerous. British soldiers moved from fact to myth, ascribing Japanese soldiers with powers that included telescopic vision. *Yank*, the US Army weekly, described the Japanese soldier as “a ‘born’ jungle and night fighter.” In the words of the British General Slim, the Japanese became the “superboogeyman of the jungle”<sup>14</sup> Fussell notes in *Wartime* that “Because they were animals, Japanese troops had certain advantages over Americans. They could see in the dark, it was believed, and survive on a diet of roots and grubs.”<sup>15</sup>

In the preface to his book, Stanley A. Frankel, a member of the 37th Division who fought relieving the 43rd on New Georgia, comments on the American soldiers’ view of the Japanese-- almost 50 years later,

I should add at this point an apology for some of the pejorative words which will crop up in some of my battlefield descriptions. Many of the words used to describe the Japanese may seem callous, bigoted and disrespectful. The reader should remember that most of these pieces were written immediately or shortly after the events they describe. I would not have been there if there had not been a war on and the Japanese had not been the enemy. My feelings were bound to surface. Remember during combat the only good Japanese is a dead Japanese. I could have edited out the mean-spirited comments, the ethnic slurs, the references to “slant eyes” and the like, but the result would have been a distortion of what was then the reality. These pieces are about war, and wars are not easily prettified.<sup>16</sup>

Frankel’s attitude is easy to understand when one considers that he and the rest of America had grown up hearing about the “yellow hordes,” knowing the Japanese were “subtle and deceitful,” and living at a time when the Oriental Exclusion Acts were in effect.<sup>17</sup> Had America not wisely interned Japanese-Americans to keep them from spying?

Japanese soldiers became in the minds of their 43rd Division counterparts malevolent, sinister creatures with supernatural powers. They were to be feared beyond all proportion. Because they were animals, in particular, monkeys, they would obviously be more at home in the jungle of New Georgia than American troops. Cameron relates, “It was, after all, in the jungles of

Malaya, Burma, and the Philippines that the myth of the Japanese superman was born.”<sup>18</sup> It did not seem to occur to the average GI that the jungle was no more familiar to the Japanese soldier from Tokyo or an Okinowan fishing village than it was to him. Japanese generals of World War II would joke, “I’ve upset Tojo, I’ll probably end up in Burma.”<sup>19</sup>

The jungle was not a pleasant place to the Japanese, nor their natural habitat, and they had not “climbed trees like monkeys and even swung on jungle vines like Tarzans in order to get around the enemy,” as one war correspondent claimed.<sup>20</sup> The Japanese had to learn the secrets of jungle fighting through experience, just as the Americans would. Nikolai Stevenson, Marine veteran of Guadalcanal comments, “Hacking our way through the jungle, we tended to think of the enemy as wily Orientals at home in this nightmarish terrain. We forgot that they were young men from crowded cities like Tokyo and farmland like Kyushu, just as we were city boys from Boston or country lads from Georgia.”<sup>21</sup> That the Japanese enjoyed a defender’s normal familiarity with the terrain was a fact lost in the psychological battle.

American soldiers did not realize the backfire qualities of identifying their adversaries as “Japes,” “monkeynips” and “jaundiced baboons.” Indeed, this simian characterization neither began nor ended with the average soldier, sailor, or marine. Admiral Halsey referred to the Japanese as “monkeymen,” and “yellow monkeys,” and commented midwar that “The Japs are losing their grip, even with their tails.”<sup>22</sup> Nor was this primitive image limited to Americans. Less pithy but more evocative than Halsey, Australian General Blamey commented, “Our enemy is a curious race cross between the human being and the ape. And like the ape, when he is cornered he knows how to die. . . . Fighting Japs is not like fighting human beings. . . . We are not dealing with human beings as we know them. We are dealing with something primitive.”<sup>23</sup> Doubtless this *something primitive* would be quite at home in the jungle.

In Eric Hammel’s *Munda Trail*, one reads that the imagined fighting qualities of the Japanese among the men of the 43rd were “virtually, but not quite, beyond belief.”<sup>24</sup> Hammel

continues to note that in the 169th there circulated a rumor of “monkey men from Borneo” on New Georgia who “could scuttle unseen through the treetops and had been trained to pounce on Americans at night from their arboreal perches.”<sup>25</sup> These myths, in the context of a dark, alien, and dripping jungle, quite naturally fueled the flames of panic, fratricide, and ultimately contributed to the production of hundreds of neuropsychiatric casualties. The Japanese had made the jungle their ally, as would, within six months, the men of the 43rd. In the initial fight on New Georgia, however, the jungle was as much an enemy as were the Japanese. Fear of both constituted perhaps an even more powerful third enemy.

The tropical jungle, alien as it is, can easily inspire fear in the uninitiated. In his masterful farewell speech at West Point in 1962, an eighty-two year old Douglas MacArthur recalls “the loneliness and utter desolation of jungle trails.”<sup>26</sup> Returning to New Guinea decades after the war, former US Marine William Manchester describes a trip into the tropical jungle:

The jungle is mysterious, trembling. I become obsessed with the illusion that some evil animal is six feet to my left . . . awaiting the chance to pounce. Hideous crabs scuttle underfoot. Reptiles are coiled around treelimps. And somewhere in this green hell lurk scorpions, bats, baboons, spiny anteaters, ratlike bandicoots, cassowaries . . . an awesome menagerie. . . . This is the kind of jungle I learned to fear and hate in my youth, a soggy miasma of disease-bearing insects, snakes, precipitous slopes, mire, swamps, heat, humidity, rushing rivers to cross. There is horror everywhere, everywhere, and angst.<sup>27</sup>

This anthropomorphic description more than hints at the power of the jungle to frighten and intimidate anyone unfamiliar with its secrets. One of the greatest powers of the jungle in World War II was its power to isolate men into small knots, where the fears of just one or two could feed upon each other until panic and flight seemed the only acceptable option. Inexperienced 43rd soldiers facing such an evil jungle, and the Japanese soldiers born of this evil, needed strong unit cohesion to conquer their fear. The exigencies of war had denied them this cohesion from the day of their federalization.

Having examined the myths and the stereotypes the Allies applied to the Japanese, it is useful to compare these negative fantasies with the facts. These facts indicate a highly

disciplined, extremely well-trained Japanese military in which sacrifice of life was expected, accepted, and even welcomed. The *Bushido* Code of the samurai warrior dominated Japanese military strategy and tactics, and permeated every aspect of Japanese life. The code, or way of the warrior, demanded total loyalty and sacrifice. This culture made the Japanese a formidable but not superhuman adversary. The Japanese had no superhuman faculties, no purely animal qualities, and no special sympathy with the jungle. Their culture, education, training, and experience were their real weapons in the early stages of the war.

In its official history, the 43rd records with pride that during training most of its members were able to complete a twenty-five mile road march within twelve hours.<sup>28</sup> In exercises in 1938 Western observers witnessed Japanese soldiers marching 122 miles in 72 hours.<sup>29</sup> During field maneuvers a Japanese regiment was expected to march twenty-five miles a day for fifteen days, resting only on four of these days.<sup>30</sup> As part of the *Bushido* Code this kind of discipline and training produced a formidable foe indeed.

By war's end, the Japanese had demonstrated a suicidal resolve as a nation that is still unprecedented. Their *kamikaze* airmen not only crashed their TNT loaded airplanes into American ships, but also routinely rammed Allied bombers with their fighters. When informed of the first *kamikaze* attacks, Emperor Hirohito commented, "Was it necessary to go to this extreme? But they have certainly done a good job."<sup>31</sup> In the final months of the war, the Japanese developed and fielded manned, flyable bombs, known as an *okas*. They dropped these devices at high altitude from a mothership bomber, piloted them to American naval vessels, and rocketed at 600 miles an hour to impact.<sup>32</sup> The Japanese also developed and fielded manned torpedoes, known as *kaitens*.<sup>33</sup>

In addition to these tactics and contraptions, their spirit is demonstrated by Japanese surrender rates. Only seventeen of the 3,000 defenders of Tarawa surrendered, the rest dying in

battle or choosing *hara-kiri*.<sup>34</sup> A scant 200 of 21,000 surrendered on Iwo Jima,<sup>35</sup> and at no time in the war did the captured-to-killed ratio exceed 1:5. In Burma, the ratio was one captured Japanese to every 120 dead.<sup>36</sup> On Saipan, suicidal *banzai* charges against American machine guns piled Japanese bodies so high that the American Marines would at times have to reposition their guns to engage additional waves. Japanese soldiers not wishing to die in this manner would kneel to be beheaded by their officers.<sup>37</sup> This orgy of suicide found its zenith as hundreds of civilians, to include mothers with children, chose to throw themselves off cliffs into the sea. Only 1,000 Japanese of the original 32,000 on Saipan survived.<sup>38</sup>

This is the Japanese World War II era nation as history sees it. In 1943, however, the Japanese had not yet resorted to organized suicide tactics. In the summer of 1943, when the 43rd was crumpling against them, the Japanese were just beginning to recede from their high-water mark. Looking through the propaganda and the rhetoric that created them as jungle dwelling super-monkeys, their weaknesses at the time were, if not apparent, at least discernable. They lacked the ability to coordinate their artillery and air support with their infantry attacks, and they lacked transports and supplies. Perhaps their greatest weakness was one of mindset. They were inflexible and had difficulty changing their tactics to meet changing situations.<sup>39</sup>

In 1939 the Japanese had taken on the Soviets at the Mongolian outpost of Nonmonhan. While western nations were wringing their hands over Japanese victories against rake-wielding Chinese peasants, the Soviets with their modern army soundly defeated the Japanese, demonstrating that it could be done. Forward-looking Japanese officers understood the lessons to be learned from Nonmohan: heavier, more resilient weapons, modern armor and artillery, synchronized operations, trucks instead of horses. The most important lesson learned at Nonmonhan was that despite the wishes of economically minded arms producers, sabers and the spirit of the bayonet were no match for massed artillery and tanks.<sup>40</sup> The Japanese at Nonmonhan had charged magnificently and had been slaughtered magnificently, much like the French who

relied on their *elan* in World War I, or the Polish horse cavalry facing Hitler's armored blitzkrieg. Open-eyed Japanese officers knew there was no future in these tactics.

These reform-minded officers, not surprisingly, were labeled defeatists and quietly retired, sacked, or moved to posts where their radical views would cause no harm. The Japanese Imperial General Staff, in superb self-delusion, continued to believe that the *Bushido* spirit alone could make up for their shortcomings in modernization, and within two years took on the industrialized Allies in the Pacific War. The prevailing attitude was summed up by the comment of Major General Muto Akira, "What is the value of combat lessons from such a trifling affair as Nomonhan?"<sup>41</sup>

The Japanese of that time completely eschewed the defensive and denigrated any officer who advocated prudence and caution in tactics. When a Japanese general officer speaking to the military academy suggested that graduates' binoculars were more powerful weapons than their sabers, another general in the audience took him to task on the spot.<sup>42</sup> When Prime Minister Hideki Tojo asked a Japanese airman the weapon used to shoot down an enemy airplane, the airman replied that a bullet would do the job. Tojo responded, "That is not the answer. It is with your spirit that you shoot it down."<sup>43</sup>

Japanese training and education was designed to ruthlessly inculcate *Bushido* values. Children began their school day by reciting: "We are the pupils of His Majesty the Emperor. Use friendly competition to make ourselves study the literary and military arts as hard as possible."<sup>44</sup> This kind of conditioning continued throughout secondary education. Boys entering the military trained in an atmosphere of extreme discipline, bordering on brutality.<sup>45</sup> Those attempting to become officers trained even harder. A poem at the military academy in 1920 read: "The young man, having made a firm resolve, leaves his native home. If he fails to acquire learning, then even though he die, he must never return."<sup>46</sup> Officers and enlisted men alike began everyday with the ceremonial reading of the *Imperial Rescript to the Army and Navy*, from the Divine Emperor

himself, admonishing them to “confine yourselves . . . to your principal duty, which is loyalty, remembering always that duty is heavier than a mountain . . . while death is lighter than a feather.”<sup>47</sup>

These young Japanese officers and men would find their way to Pacific Islands such as Guadalcanal, where they would receive orders from their leaders such as this one from Lieutenant General Maruyama Masao, “If we are unsuccessful in its [Guadalcanal’s] capture, not even one man should expect to return alive.”<sup>48</sup> (One will remember a similar order issued by MacArthur to Eichelberger regarding Buna in New Guinea--page 54. The differences in the American case: it was two generals speaking to each other, no demand was made for total annihilation, the emphasis being on leadership, and MacArthur most likely was speaking figuratively.) Or, perhaps the young Japanese soldier would find himself on Rendova, where he would write in his diary, “If the enemy comes to Rendova, our garrison of 72 men is certain to be killed. And I am one of those 72 men. Life is like a weak candle in a strong wind. It may go out at any moment.”<sup>49</sup> If he lived to the last days of the war, before climbing into his *oka* and flying to his death, the twenty-two year old officer would write in *haiku*, “If only we might fall / Like cherry blossoms in the Spring / So pure and radiant!”<sup>50</sup>

Had the leaders and soldiers of the 43rd been able to see that their enemy was fanatically aggressive, resigned to death in combat, and willing to throw his life away for no gain, they may have devised their tactics differently. More importantly, they may have not ascribed to him the superhuman qualities that created the fear contributing to neuropsychiatric casualties. Lieutenant Colonel S. P. Marland, Jr., the 43rd Division G-3 (Operations Officer) wrote as the first of his ten general comments in his after action report that: “Troops employed to fight the Japs should be so trained, disciplined, and led as to regard the fiction stories of Japanese hokum as ridiculous. The Jap is tricky, but not as tricky as many have been led to believe.”<sup>51</sup> Marland stresses training, discipline, and leadership, three vital factors in developing strong unit cohesion. The words of

this frustrated officer would be amplified in 1946 by Cultural Anthropologist Ruth Benedict: "The Japanese were the most alien enemy the United States had ever fought in an all out struggle. . . . It made war in the Pacific more than a series of landings on island beaches. . . . It made it a major problem in the nature of the enemy. We had to understand their behavior in order to cope with it."<sup>52</sup> This understanding was not assisted and was in fact hindered by Hollywood and the other sources of wartime propaganda.

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, they were at the height of their strength. They were a militarist nation that had been at war for years. Their poor industrial base was soon overextended, and no amount of *Bushido* spirit could ultimately compete with the angered Allies. In the summer of 1943, however, the Europe first policy, the 2 percent gross national product expenditure on armaments in a poor, isolationist, pre war America,<sup>53</sup> and the final victory were out of sight to the 43rd soldier grasping for sanity in his foxhole. The proper medical care, trust in his unit, training, leadership, and buddies that would help him see the enemy as a mere mortal eluded him; and if he became a neuropsychiatric casualty, it is not a leap in logic to conclude that the circumstances of mass-production mobilization had set him up.

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1989), 43.

<sup>2</sup>Alan D. Coox, *Nomonhan: Japan Against Russia, 1939* (Sanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985), 1079.

<sup>3</sup>War and Navy Departments, *A Pocket Guide to New Guinea and the Solomons* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1943), 1.

<sup>4</sup>John Glen Gray, *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), 148-9.

<sup>5</sup>Walter Wanger, *We've Never Been Licked*, dir. by John Rawlins, 105 min., Universal Pictures, Inc., 1943, videocassette.

<sup>6</sup>Walter Wanger, *Gung Ho*, dir. by Ray Enright, 88 min., Universal Pictures, Inc., 1943, videocassette.

<sup>7</sup>Norris F. Hall, Zechariah Chaffee, Jr., and Manley O. Hudson, *The Next War: Three Addresses Delivered at a Symposium at Harvard University, November 18, 1924* (Cambridge, MA: The Harvard Alumni Bulletin Press, 1925), 48.

<sup>8</sup>Meiron Harries and Susie Harries, *Soldiers of the Sun: The Rise and Fall of the Imperial Japanese Army* (New York: Random House, 1991), 405.

<sup>9</sup>Yuki Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), 129.

<sup>10</sup>Craig M. Cameron, "American Samurai: The Influence of Myth and Imagination on the Conduct of the Battle in the First Marine Division During the Pacific War" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1990), 79.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 79-80.

<sup>12</sup>Fussell, 116-177.

<sup>13</sup>John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York, Pantheon Books, 1986), 85, 181-190.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 112-113.

<sup>15</sup>Fussell, 119.

<sup>16</sup>Stanley A. Frankel, *Frankel-y Speaking About World War II in the South Pacific* (Scarsdale, NY: American Stratford Graphic Services, Inc., 1992), 3.

<sup>17</sup>Frank Keegan, Studs Terkel's "The Good War" (New York: The New Press, 1984), 35-36.

<sup>18</sup>Cameron, 74.

<sup>19</sup>Harries and Harries, 331.

<sup>20</sup>Gerald F. Linderman, *The World Within War: America's Combat Experience in World War II* (New York: The Free Press, 1997), 171.

<sup>21</sup>Nikolai Stevenson, "Four Months on the Front Line," *American Heritage* 36, no. 6 (October-November 1985): 55.

<sup>22</sup>Dower, 85-86.

<sup>23</sup>Tanaka, 132.

<sup>24</sup>Hammel, 155.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup>Lieutenant Colonel (retired) Lawrence P. Crocker, *Army Officer's Guide* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1996), xi.

<sup>27</sup>William Manchester, *Goodbye, Darkness: A Memoir of the Pacific War* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1979), 133-114.

<sup>28</sup>Department of the Army, *Official History of the 43rd Infantry Division, World War II*, 17, Combined Arms Research Library, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, file no. N-11798.

<sup>29</sup>Dr. Roger J. Spiller, "Cherry Blossoms Falling: Japanese Combat Behavior at War's End," 8, unpublished manuscript in possession of the author.

<sup>30</sup>Harries and Harries, 169.

<sup>31</sup>Ivan Morris, *The Nobility of Failure: Tragic Heroes in the History of Japan* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975), 287.

<sup>32</sup>Morris, 276-278, 298.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 300.

<sup>34</sup>John Pett, *The World at War Series: Pacific, Island to Island War*, dir. by John Pett, 52 min., Thames Video, 1992, videocassette.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup>Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1946), 38.

<sup>37</sup>Morris, 299.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup>Harries and Harries, 334.

<sup>40</sup>Coox, 1007.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 1022-1026.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 1026.

<sup>43</sup>Toshio Iritani, *Group Psychology of the Japanese in Wartime* (London, England: Kegan Paul, 1991), 64.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>45</sup>Iris Chang, *The Rape of Nanking* (New York, Penguin Books, 1997), 32.

<sup>46</sup>Harries and Harries, 169-173.

<sup>47</sup>Lieutenant Tadayoshi Sakurai, *Human Bullets: A Soldier's Story of Port Arthur* (New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 1907), 261-267. The *Imperial Rescript* was also read in schools, and there are accounts of readers, who having stumbled over the words, committed *hara-kiri* rather than bear the guilt and shame of such an insult to His Divine Majesty.

<sup>48</sup>Cameron, 74.

<sup>49</sup>Stanley A. Frankel, *The 37th Infantry Division in World War II* (Washington, DC: Infantry Journal Press, 1948), 79.

<sup>50</sup>Morris, 276.

<sup>51</sup>Lieutenant Colonel S. P. Marland, Jr., "Report of Operations of the 43rd Infantry Division during the Munda-Arundel Campaign," 14, National Archives file no. 343-3.

<sup>52</sup>Benedict, 1.

<sup>53</sup>Harries and Harries, 317-318.

## CHAPTER 5

### NEUROPSYCHIATRIC CASUALTIES

By the time Colonel Hallam arrived on New Georgia on 14 July 1943, the 43rd had been in continuous combat for over two weeks, and they were grinding to a halt. Almost half of their riflemen were hand-carrying supplies. Hundreds had been killed, and thousands had been wounded or fallen victim to malaria, dysentery, or other ailments. Hundreds more were walking away from battle each day as neuropsychiatric casualties. Success of the New Georgia Operation hung in the balance, and failure would jeopardize the seizure of Rabaul. Hallam had to take action immediately.

Applying some professional sense as a doctor and a soldier,<sup>1</sup> Colonel Hallam began to shoot very effectively from the hip. He decided not to evacuate anyone from the island who, with a little rest, could return to the fight. Meeting with Lieutenant Colonel Enion, the 43rd Division Surgeon on 15 July, Colonel Hallam and the 43rd's medical personnel came up with a plan.<sup>2</sup> They would carefully screen patients presenting neuropsychiatric complaints to determine if the patient was in fact suffering from an emotional disorder requiring evacuation or was merely fatigued to the point of ineffectiveness. Those requiring evacuation would be evacuated and treated. The remainder (the vast majority) would be rested for a day or two on the barrier islands, provided with a shower, clean clothes, and hot food, and be sent again into battle as fresh, but experienced troops. Eric Hammel writes in *Munda Trail* that to Colonel Hallam, "'Combat fatigue' came to be understood as meaning physical exhaustion; 'war neurosis' was given to mean emotional depletion."<sup>3</sup>

Necessity is indeed the mother of invention. The irony is that in the case of neuropsychiatric casualties, World War II physicians and commanders were *reinventing* knowledge. All of the lessons applicable to the diagnosis and treatment of neuropsychiatric casualties had been learned in World War I and promptly forgotten. The Army Surgeon General's

foreword to the Medical Department's *Neuropsychiatry in World War II* reads, "The experiences of military psychiatry in two World Wars have been extensive, and the lessons learned from them equally so. In both wars, the basic therapies were the same. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the major lesson from World War I had to be largely rediscovered and relearned in the Second World War: that treatment of the acute breakdown must begin as close to the site of its inception as possible."<sup>4</sup>

Commanders and physicians in both wars found themselves facing several tough questions in diagnosing and treating neuropsychiatric casualties. Who is merely suffering from momentary fright? Who is suffering from battle fatigue? And who is clinically ill? Is the ailment physical rather than psychological in origin? How should these men be treated? Discipline? Evacuation? Drugs? Rest? General Griswold, Colonel Hallam, and the rest of the commanders and doctors on New Georgia were wrestling with these very issues in the face of the enemy. The simple fact for the 43rd was that the division had become largely combat ineffective in mid-July 1943 due, in a large part, to neuropsychiatric casualties. The mission had to continue, yet the neuropsychiatric casualties could not be ignored. Foremost in the mind of Hallam was the conservation of combat power. But what does one do with all these shaking, stuttering men? Considering the problem, the leaders of the 43rd did so with a forgotten knowledge of the history of neuropsychiatric casualties.

The nosology of neuropsychiatric casualties is not an exact science. The incomplete records--low intensity and short duration of battles, ease of desertion, and primitive nature of medicine and psychiatry prior to World War I--provide little accurate historical background. Nevertheless, pathologic battle reactions, as physical wounds, require both diagnosis and treatment, tricky propositions at best. No such actions were possible prior to the discovery in World War I and rediscovery in World War II that not all and in fact very few soldiers who break on the battlefield are cowards. Add to these factors the reality that physical wounds in combat

may result from mental fragmentation, and the issue becomes even more confusing. A soldier who, breaking mentally, flees his foxhole and is subsequently wounded is not likely considered a *neuropsychiatric* casualty, but rather a *physical* casualty.<sup>5</sup> Physical and mental mayhem roam battlefields hand in hand, reluctant to part.

In addition to the above dilemmas, the following two individual neuropsychiatric cases demonstrate the almost sacred, completely unpredictable individuality of each case. Challenges in diagnosis and treatment in these cases are apparent:

Case 1: British Army colonel, World War I. The colonel is treated for a physical wound in the arm. After months of surgery and massage therapy the colonel develops hysterical paralysis in the forearm. He is treated by a psychiatrist, "cured," and returned from England to France, upon arrival dispatching a grateful letter to his doctor from the front. A few months later he is again invalidated to England with hysterical paralysis. He is seen by a neurologist who offers a "correct" diagnosis of the disability. A few hours later the colonel kills himself. The psychiatrist noted that "a retrospect of the case recalls many traits in the patient – overscrupulousness, hesitancy of speech, peculiar little tics – which marked him as a sufferer from pathological doubts and fears against which he was carrying on a single-handed fight which finally defeated him."<sup>6</sup>

Case 2: British Army major, World War II. Upon the disappearance of his dog, this erstwhile resolute, competent artillery commander became morose, desperate, and spoke of his impending death. He could not sleep and was treated with tranquilizers. He began to drink and was repeatedly found dead drunk. He was killed by a shell splinter to the head, having failed to wear his helmet.<sup>7</sup>

There is a tendency to construct pithy, eminently quotable pronouncements concerning neuropsychiatric casualties. To the commander, "he is a coward," to the doctor, "he needs psychotherapy," to the soldiers themselves, "ahh, he's just worn out." There are, however, no such simple facts in even one case. The laws of cause and effect go awry, or are suspended

altogether. It is this uncertainty that led various interests within the military to vie for the ownership of diagnosis and treatment of neuropsychiatric casualties, and more immediately, for the definition of appropriate battlefield behavior. Traditional culture owned the high ground simply because it was there first. Science, on the other hand, was launching a sputtering attack because science was changing. Parlor room psychiatry, heretofore viewed as little more than shamanism, would in World War II blossom into social psychology. The war would teach better than any seminar the psychological effects of one's primary group, as well as one's society as a whole. It would also teach that mass-producing tanks and airplanes is much more effective than mass-producing soldiers and units.

Proponency for neuropsychiatric casualties bounces between three often competing groups: The combat commanders, the physicians, and the soldiers.

The combat commanders' job is to win the battle. They tend to take a traditional, values based view which places them in an untenable position, as society's view of traditional values changes with time. Cowardice was beginning to mean something different in 1917 than it meant in 1864. By 1943, the entire concept of cowardice was under review. Courage by World War II had come to mean survival, or just getting through it, rather than the pre-World War I definition of mastering a situation. Still, the same society that urges compassion in a commander demands that he win the battle. Aware of the infectious nature of neuropsychiatric casualties, aware that entire regiments can fold up and run, and seeing this as a moral failure and character flaw, commanders to whom the mission must always come first tended to be somewhat hard-nosed regarding neuropsychiatric casualties. Commanders looked askance at psychiatrists, wondering if advances in science were a disguise for the slipping of traditional values.

The physicians' job is to help the individual. The title "military doctor" has an element of oxymoronism about it. The military, in order to accomplish the nation's will, kills men. Doctors, under the Hippocratic Oath, are sworn to protect and to heal the individual. Physicians relieve

individual suffering. That is what they do, and that is how they are trained. Doctors, therefore, find themselves in a similar bind to that of commanders. Knowing that a battle-fatigued soldier who can still function is one more gun on the line, two men in a foxhole instead of one, the doctor must leave that soldier in battle, even though the soldier suffers, to help ensure the survival of more soldiers.

The soldiers' job is survival. They may often not see the need to win, especially in the heat of battle. They know that in a war with no personnel rotation policy it is only a matter of time for each of them. They speak of "the thousand yard stare," or being "fagged out" "done in" "used up." There is a waiting game. "Who will go first? Me, or the war?" They know that the more of them there are, the better chance they all have to survive. The movement of neuropsychiatric casualties to the rear does not warm their hearts. Like high school football players, they tend to look at the injured player as somehow not meeting his obligation, and although they understand his injury, he is not "one of them" anymore. Paradoxically, they do not want someone fighting with them whom they cannot trust.

These three groups, the commanders, the doctors, and the soldiers are in effect competing for the acceptable answer on how to behave in combat. One should note also that members of the three diverse groups also share these distinct views. As John Ellis notes in his book on World War I trench warfare, *Eye Deep in Hell*, "For many generals, and even doctors, most victims of shell shock were little more than cowards and malingerers who simply ought to 'pull themselves together' and 'act like a man.'"<sup>8</sup> Doubtless some soldiers themselves maintained this view as well.

Notwithstanding the competing and overlapping concepts above, ignorance, in fact, proved to be the chief enemy in both wars, exacerbated by what the Army in a 1946 report on battle casualties realized was "the 'we don't discuss it' [repression] idea, or 'it just isn't so[denial]'"<sup>9</sup> syndrome. One searches in vain through a 17 December 1943 report of the 3rd

Infantry Division on "Casualties and Replacements" for any mention at all of neuropsychiatric casualties. In its sixty-three legal-sized sheets, peppered with a dizzying array of charts, graphs, and statistical analysis, one finds only that of 4,961 hospital admissions for disease, 1,051, or over one-fifth of the admissions, are for FUO (Fever of Undetermined Origin), in a report that carries separate categories for malaria (45 soldiers), jaundice (516 soldiers) and exhaustion (372 soldiers).<sup>10</sup> FUO, of course, is the noncommittal, nondescriptive, nondamning and culturally acceptable term for neuropsychiatric casualty.

Even after the recognition of what was called *shell shock* in World War I, soldiers who became ineffective due to anything but a visible physical wound, serious illness, or death were thought of as cowards. The term *shell shock* itself implies a physical cause; some sort of damage to the nervous system seen in civilian cases of traumatic neurosis following railroad accidents, a condition popularly classified in the 1860s as *railway spine*.<sup>11</sup> A physical cause for a psychological problem eliminates the stigma associated with cowardice. A physical cause provides absolution. British World War I military physician Dr. H. Crichton-Miller notes in 1944's *The Neuroses in War* that causes as varied as emphysema, arterio-sclerosis, being buried alive by shell impacts, and even an unfaithful wife were associated with what was then referred to as *war neurosis*. Crichton-Miller then engages in classic British understatement, "The functional cases of the Great War rarely exhibited a pure aetiology."<sup>12</sup>

The real cause of neuropsychiatric casualties is aptly described by Captain John Appel, writing in 1944: "The key to an understanding of the psychiatric problem is the simple fact that the danger of being killed imposes a strain so great that it causes men to break down. . . . There is no such thing as 'getting used to combat.'"<sup>13</sup> A more cerebral rendering of the dilemma from Dr. Thomas W. Salmon, writing in 1917 offers: "The psychological basis of the war neurosis . . . is an elaboration with endless variations of one central theme: escape from an intolerable situation in real life to one made tolerable by neurosis."<sup>14</sup> The simple, inescapable fact for soldiers is that

their options are limited. Unless they are rotated individually out of the combat zone, their only guaranteed permanent escape from battle is maiming or death. Desertion guarantees no permanent release from combat and until recently could easily result in a firing squad. These circumstances often forced soldiers suffering beyond their limits to manifest psychosomatic symptoms (often paralysis or blindness, known as conversion neurosis) to honorably depart the battlefield.<sup>15</sup> Regardless of classifications and sanctions created by the military, individual soldiers will break and will have no control over the how, where, or when. There are limits to what orders and a desire to obey them can accomplish. Fear of punishment may prevent a soldier from leaving the battlefield, but it will not make him fearless. The traditional view that “manly men” maintain control and “sissies” lose control is meaningless to a neuropsychiatric casualty.

The only universal concept applicable to neuropsychiatric casualties is that sooner or later *every* soldier becomes one, assuming he is not killed, wounded, rotated out of combat, or sees an armistice declared first. An American deserter in France in 1944 aptly describes the situation: “All the men I knew and trained with have been killed or transferred. I’m lonely. They promised me I would be relieved and rotated, but nothing ever happens. I can’t stand the infantry any longer. Why won’t they transfer me to some other outfit? The shells seem to come closer all the time and I can’t stand them.”<sup>16</sup> In 1944 The Surgeon General validated this soldier’s condition, noting that the reservoir of courage and unit pride can take a soldier only so far and that “practically all men in rifle battalions who are not otherwise disabled ultimately become psychiatric casualties.”<sup>17</sup>

The Army Ground forces 1946 casualty report flatly states, “Certain basic facts must be faced, and the first one is that the front line soldier wears out in combat.”<sup>18</sup> Several theorists, military physicians, and commanders have confirmed the concept that each man has a finite reservoir of courage and that once it is depleted the soldier requires time away from combat to replenish this reservoir, if it can be replenished at all. If that time is not forthcoming, the soldier

will break or crack under the strain required to control his fear (control of fear is otherwise known as bravery or courage). Lord Moran, writing of his observations as a British medical officer in both world wars, speaks of courage as a commodity that is either spent or saved.<sup>19</sup> In an effort to further quantify, two American psychologists following a unit from Normandy inland after D-Day produced a combat effectiveness curve which shows the average infantryman reduced to a vegetable after sixty continuous days in combat (figure 8).

World War II physicians and commanders were initially rendered defenseless by their ignorance of the above facts. Dr. (Captain) John J. Mohrman, of the 43rd Division remembers no psychiatric orientation until *after* the New Georgia operation.<sup>20</sup> Dr. Mohrman was assigned to the 43rd as division psychiatrist *after* the New Georgia Operation because the division personnel authorization did not include a psychiatrist prior to that time. In November 1940, The War Department, disregarding the value of division psychiatrists in World War I, dropped the position from the division medical staff, "in a move toward economy of personnel." Division psychiatrists were not reestablished until November 1943, almost two years after Pearl Harbor.<sup>21</sup>

The state of training in combat neuropsychiatry was just about nil as well. Dr. (Lieutenant Colonel) Martin A. Berezin, Americal Division Surgeon, notes that he was the only psychiatrist on Guadalcanal and that "I knew next to nothing about neuropsychiatric combat cases and was not prepared by my training to manage them. Whatever I did for treatment and disposition later came about as I learned from day to day experience."<sup>22</sup> How unfortunate that deliberate, institutional "forgetting" kept from Berezin's view the "Report of the War Office Committee of Enquiry on Shell Shock," published in 1922. There he would have found concise, logical guidance for handling neuropsychiatric casualties, resulting from the wisdom gained in the Great War. The report states quite clearly that: "All the medical witnesses who have had experience of front-line service insisted on the importance of treating men who needed a rest if possible within the battalion area. . . . They also agreed that men whose condition necessitated any prolonged

treatment in hospital are as a rule useless for further front-line service."<sup>23</sup> By 1944, the lessons having been relearned, a sizeable majority (65 to 77 percent) of both American officers and enlisted men surveyed in both theaters by Samuel Stouffer believed that "men who develop incapacitating fear and anxiety should be treated as medical casualties rather than as offenders."<sup>24</sup>

Commanders were ignorant of scientific advances as well. Dr. Berezin recounts Major General Patch's traditional, uninformed attitude, "He advised me quite directly that neuropsychiatric cases were a disgrace to the service, and he insisted that all cases should be court martialed."<sup>25</sup> It was quite natural for General Patch to maintain this view, common among commanders at the time. The 1946 report on casualties laments that "Senior commanders secretly were prone to bemoan the lack of backbone in young America."<sup>26</sup> Some did so not so secretly, witness the infamous "slapping incident" of General George S. Patton.

Discipline as a remedy for neuropsychiatric cases had failed in the Great War, but that had been forgotten or more accurately, culturally repressed. There is not one word about neuropsychiatric casualties in the 1941 version of the *Soldier's Handbook*,<sup>27</sup> nor in the formidable two volume *ROTC Infantry Manual* of 1942.<sup>28</sup> *Infantry in Battle*, an anthology of World War I vignettes edited by General Marshall and published in 1939, indicates that "morale" can be maintained by activity, thus prevention of neuropsychiatric casualties is worth a pound of cure, which is not discussed.<sup>29</sup> Stress on the "moral stamina" of the soldier, one reads in the 1941 edition of Field Manual 100-5, *Operations*, can be ameliorated with "discipline based on high ideals of military conduct."<sup>30</sup> One notes in these various manuals a complete absence of the lexicon of neuropsychiatric casualties. *Shell shock*, the most common term in World War I, is conspicuous by its absence. The discussions instead center around issues of character, tacitly implying that only those without it would dare leave the field of battle (honor) without a grievous wound. The etymology of the term *baptism of fire* may be obscure, but it does imply that those who make it through have acquired a state of grace of sorts. As for the rest, they perhaps were

lacking in character.<sup>31</sup> Those Americans passing the test with flying colors are awarded the Medal of *Honor*, earned on the field of *honor*.

Continuing his discussion with General Patch, Dr. Berezin

remonstrated with him and he agreed to a compromise as follows: The enlisted men with a neuropsychiatric diagnosis would be left to medical care, but officers with such a diagnosis would be court-martialed and dismissed from the service with disgrace. . . . Then it occurred to me to ask him if the medical service could have full responsibility for all organic disorders, and to this he quite readily agreed. I believe that, if the records can be checked on the first month on Guadalcanal, there will not be found any neuropsychiatric cases among officers. *But some cases will be found who had 'blast concussions' [shell shock] instead; that is, had an organic disorder [emphasis added].* Needless to say, this same subterfuge was used on many enlisted men as well.<sup>32</sup>

General Patch may appear a harsh and cruel man. In 1943, however, his comments merely reflected one of the three approaches to the treatment of neuropsychiatric casualties: the disciplinary approach. Contextually this approach had been practiced for centuries and in World War I was an accepted form of treatment even in the medical corps. The British Dr. Yealland once placed a burning cigarette on the tongue of a hysterically mute soldier in order to "cure" him.<sup>33</sup> While this practice may seem sadistic, more dreadful still was a more common practice: execution for cowardice.

As late as the waning months of 1943, soldiers of the 43rd evacuated as neuropsychiatric casualties indicated to a medical board considering their cases that they had been "broken in rank" as a result of their evacuation.<sup>34</sup> Dr. Berezin indicates that among physicians, a professional conspiracy emerged to deal with the clash between new scientific knowledge and traditional mores, a conspiracy that shrouded neuropsychiatric casualties under the acceptable mantle of physical cause. It was the challenge of military doctors in both world wars to convince commanders that neuropsychiatric casualties can occur with no direct physical cause, although contextually, military doctors spent a lot more time removing bullets than they did discussing the finer points of psychiatry.

In addition to the disciplinary approach, the other two approaches, one demanding immediate evacuation and psychological treatment, the other demanding treatment as close to the "injury" as possible, gained favor in both wars as the wars progressed. Dr. Jules Coleman, contributing to *Neuropsychiatry in World War II*, notes, "There are basically two schools of thought on psychiatric treatment in combat. One believes in appropriate psychotherapeutic intervention to provide emotional catharsis and to recover amnesic memory losses; the other, that recovery is essentially a function of social support, and that any kind of psychotherapeutic intervention is contraindicated."<sup>35</sup> This is the classic analytical versus social psychology debate. Dr. Coleman's comments are supported by the experience on New Georgia of Dr. (Lieutenant Colonel) Hobart Mikesell, of the 37th Division, who commented that "we did salvage many who were returned to their units, after two or three days rest, a bath, and an opportunity to get their feet on the ground. . . . All of us from the General on down felt that the patients had a greater chance of recovery if they stayed with the division because the organizational spirit was a vital factor."<sup>36</sup> Keeping men with their units is not, however, as easy a proposition as one may imagine. Dr. Mikesell points out that, "There is a lot of theory involved in this problem because it is the opinion of many that the best place to salvage a man is right up at the front. Well, that's true. However, in the type of warfare we were in, where the Clearing Station was from 300 to 400 yards on up to a mile and a half from the front, you couldn't hold them in the regimental area, because there just wasn't any place to segregate them."<sup>37</sup>

Segregation is vital to the mental health and fighting spirit of the remainder of the unit. Combat is unpleasant. Normal reactions to it, according to Dr. (Lieutenant Colonel) Stephen W. Ranson, include stress, transitory paralysis, tremors, anorexia, diarrhea, nausea, faintness and lassitude. Ranson comments that "despite the unpleasant nature of many reactions to combat, soldiers whose responses are within normal limits must be subjected to normal military demands, only thus can morale and discipline be maintained and unjustifiable leakage of combat manpower

through medical channels be prevented. When this principle is violated by the psychiatrist the combat soldier's complaint is reasonable: 'Why did you send that man to the rear? If he is psychoneurotic, so am I, and so is everybody up here any length of time.'<sup>38</sup> Ranson is dealing with dynamics outside of science. His "normal limits" are the purview of philosophy and culture rather than biology, a philosophy that changes over time, and changed rapidly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is indeed a dynamic problem.

Ranson addresses the infectious nature of the disease. Commanders and medical officers know that once a condition is created as an illness thousands of new patients will begin to suffer from it. Once the military accepted *war neurosis*, *psychoneurosis*, or *battle fatigue* as a legitimate means of avoiding combat, they realized that men so diagnosed would have to be sequestered from their comrades who were also suffering, but still fighting. One need only revisit the comments of Lieutenant Colonel Wells (page 58) to see the powerful negative effects of the mixing of combatants and convalescents. Returning to the rear area from the battle line, Wells observed a squad he sent there on an errand cavorting in the surf, having completely forgotten their mission. Wells himself had to fight off the urge to join them.

There is another, perhaps more critical element to the infectious nature of the disease, and that is the strong tendency of uncontrolled fear to spread rapidly from one man to the next. Soldiers depend on each other for protection. In much the same way that a jammed weapon may render a soldier defenseless, a "jammed" comrade may do so as well. Whether the reality of the defenseless state is indeed the case or whether it is merely perception, one cannot argue with the evidence cited by Samuel Stouffer in his study on World War II soldiers. Replying to the question "What effect did seeing a man's nerves 'crack up' have on you?" 49 percent of the soldiers questioned answered, "Made me nervous, jittery, or feel like cracking up myself." An additional 15 percent replied that it "Made me feel depressed and lowered my morale."<sup>39</sup>

As the approaches towards neuropsychiatric casualties changed and evolved, the language applied to describe neuropsychiatric casualties also changed. The primitive British label for neuropsychiatric casualties in World War I was in fact *N.Y.D.N. (Not Yet Diagnosed, Nervous)*. Uncomfortable with such a clinical, non-descriptive term, doughboys, *poilous*, and tommies were simultaneously coming up with their own name, *shell shock*. (Germany, through both World Wars, refused to accept the concept of neuropsychiatric casualties.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, German soldiers in World War I referred to the condition as *grenadefieber*, a credible mirror of the English *shell shock*.)<sup>41</sup> Some physicians were uncomfortable with this term because it implied a direct physical cause, while others, proponents of the physical cause, thought the term appropriate.<sup>42</sup> A similar disparity between medical and soldier terminology is reflected in the World War II medical term *war neurosis*, (the medical offspring of *N.Y.D.N.*, in common usage in medical circles in 1916)<sup>43</sup> and its G. I. cousin, *battle fatigue*, which came quite a bit closer to the mark for describing the problem with most soldiers who could no longer fight. In reading the medical reports of World War II one continually encounters the terms *war neurosis* and *N.P.* (neuropsychiatric casualty), along with *exhaustion* and *fatigue* variations. In speaking with veterans outside the medical branches the term most often heard is *battle fatigue*.

The language is nothing if not telling. Soldiers prefer *battle fatigue* because it is a more accurate description of a more common ailment. More subtly perhaps, they prefer it because fatigue is a common condition cured easily with a little rest. The term, if nothing else, is familiar to them. They wear *fatigues*, do *fatigue* details, and spend most of their time relatively *fatigued*. *Neurosis*, on the other hand, is a strange, foreign word implying a long stay in the “looney bin” and stigmatization for life. The currently accepted medical term, *neuropsychiatric casualty*, continues to imply ambivalence vis-a-vis a physical or psychological cause. The term is uncommon among modern soldiers, who use instead *battle fatigue*, *combat fatigue*, or the more updated *battlefield stress*. Currently available among US Army publications are three graphic

training aids entitled “Battle Fatigue: Normal, Common Signs -- What to Do for Self & Buddy,” “Battle Fatigue: More Serious Signs -- Leader Actions,” and “Battle Fatigue: Company Leader Actions and Prevention.” Available also, unimagined in World War II, are two field manuals, FM 22-51, *Leaders Manual for Combat Stress Control*, and FM 22-9, *Soldier Performance in Continuous Operations*.

Another interesting dynamic in neuropsychiatric terminology is the tendency for operations in the European theater to employ terms related to exhaustion, while in the Pacific the terms are more psychiatric in nature. One possible explanation is the relatively short, acute nature of island battle as opposed to the endless stretches of African desert and Italian mud through which soldiers in Europe fought.

To further complicate matters, the most common diagnostic term for the Army's 929,307 neuropsychiatric admissions in World War II was *psychoneurosis*, a term and “diagnosis” applied to 648,460 of these admissions.<sup>44</sup> *Psychoneurosis* implies a preexisting psychological problem, unrelated, or at the very least merely uncovered or exacerbated by combat. The problem in these cases was poor recruit screening, many believed, although the Army disqualified for service on the basis of emotional disorders 970,000 men, a number which dovetails nicely with a 20 percent Selective Service sample reporting 169,624 men rejected for psychiatric reasons.<sup>45</sup> In his first report to President Roosevelt, dated 29 August 1942, Lewis B. Hershey, the Director of the Selective Service, notes almost 4 percent of the initial 19,923 candidates for service rejected on such grounds, a total of 816 men.<sup>46</sup> During World War II, the Selective Service screened twenty million men and called fourteen million of them to active duty.<sup>47</sup>

The concept of poor screening as the reason for neuropsychiatric casualties remains viable in the minds of doctors conducting an after-the-fact screening of a segment of the 43rd's neuropsychiatric casualties. The medical board notes “Poor material, both constitutional and mental, was found. . . . The need for rapid mobilization left little time for selection of personnel . .

. many men were inducted who were not good material for infantry soldiers, and elimination of them from combat units is recommended.”<sup>48</sup> The board also wisely noted, however, that “many cases diagnosed as ‘War Neurosis’ were primarily exhaustion and fatigue cases, who might have been salvaged had facilities been available,”<sup>49</sup> hence the reaction in both thinking and terminology from a preexisting psychiatric diagnosis (psychoneurosis), to a diagnosis based on fatigue (battle or combat fatigue or exhaustion). Colonel Hallam, in the opening paragraph of his discussion of neuropsychiatric casualties on New Georgia, roundly sums up the diagnosis, classification, and treatment dilemma: “The most serious medical problem encountered in the NEW GEORGIA operations was the relatively high incidence of mental disturbances, coming under the general classification of ‘WAR NUEROSIS’ a misnomer in most instances, but of medical importance since practically all cases of combat fatigue, exhaustion states and ‘war weariness’ were erroneously directed or gravitated through medical channels along with the true psychoneurotics and those suffering with a temporary mental disturbance, currently termed ‘WAR NEUROSIS.’”<sup>50</sup>

Revisiting Robert Casco’s diary,

July 12-Lost several men during last night and early this morning. Hogan and Cerino were killed. Roger Hedman, Jacobs, Bennett, Robertson, Elia, Rabalals & Herbert got neurosis. Jordan was wounded. K. Reed got broken thumb. Crocket also got war neurosis. In the afternoon we made an attempt at the enemy strongpoint facing us. Ran into heavy machine gun fire and mortar fire. Sgt. Deck was shell-shocked. Needham got neurosis. Babineaux accidentally shot himself in the leg. Morrison got a shrapnel wound in the back. We withdrew and set up bivouac for the night.

One can see the interchangeable use of the terms *shell shock* and *war neurosis*. Perhaps nobody had informed Casco that *shell shock* had been replaced by *battle fatigue*, and the appearance of *war neurosis* could have come from a later brushing up of his diary. Perhaps he had a friend who was a medic. One does not know. What is of much greater importance is his impression that one “gets” neurosis, as one would catch a cold. Casco and his comrades had been in continuous combat for seventy-two hours. There is some likelihood that after three days of the

nightmarish combat on New Georgia--after seeing Jordan wounded and Hogan and Cerino killed--the *war neurosis* described by Casco would have been classified as *battle fatigue* by Colonel Hallam, cured with a day or two of rest. Reed perhaps broke his thumb to avoid the stigma of *neurosis*, and Babineux's shot in the leg was perhaps not accidental. Were this the case, these thirteen men would in no way be exceptional. Their actions are in fact not uncommon for soldiers in both world wars. *Neuropsychiatry in World War II* reports well over a million admissions for neuropsychiatric conditions in World War II. (Note: this number includes outpatients, casualties not counted in the 929,307 figure quoted on page 96, note 44.)<sup>51</sup>

Casco's understanding of neuropsychiatric casualties is not that far removed from the conventional wisdom of his time, even among those of greater rank and education. In Albert Q. Maisel's *The Wounded Get Back*, published in 1943, one reads that "during our first year of the war, and to some extent even today, the published comments on war psychiatry have been of the most lugubrious and dismal variety."<sup>52</sup> Seeking the truth himself, Maisel went to the South Pacific and visited rear areas and care facilities for neuropsychiatric cases. Instead of finding the violent, rabid "mental cases" he had expected, what he instead found were "sick, tired, emaciated, worn out, jittery men who had proved temporarily unable to stand the strain of battle or the anticipations of combat."<sup>53</sup> After checking the records of those few psychotics he did encounter, Maisel believed them to be "not battle casualties at all. They were men whose heredity and environment combined to make them candidates for a psychiatric ward, even if there had been no war."<sup>54</sup> The reader is assured that Maisel's book is "a wartime book . . . produced in full compliance with the government's regulations for conserving paper and other essential materials." Censorship is not mentioned, but it would be to the war effort's advantage to depict the true "mental cases" as such from birth.

Division Surgeons on New Georgia were having classification problems of their own. Dr. (Lieutenant Colonel) Mikesell, the 37th Division Surgeon, was fortunate enough to have with him

Captain Sol Greisman, a neuropsychiatrist from Pittsburg. Even so, the difficulty of classifying neuropsychiatric casualties is evident in Mikesell's comments:

There is just a sort of a stigma that goes with such classification and it is an injustice to some men. I was too busy to be at the Clearing Station to see those cases but Captain Greisman watched them and evaluated every neuropsychiatric case that went through his station. There are four general types: First, there is the man who evidently had a psychopathic background and was not detected at induction. Second, there is the lad doing a good job who is cool and collected. Suddenly a shell or bomb explodes near him which throws him into an uncoordinated creature that is absolutely valueless. That fellow is definitely a battle casualty. I mean there is no personal background. It must be on the basis of an injury. Third, there are those who don't have a definite psychopathic history. They may be weak characters and due to fatigue and frightening circumstances, they become temporarily deranged so they can't function properly. With some rest, many of these fellows can be salvaged. However, not all of them. Fourth, there is the individual who probably borders on malingering's type; just yellow and wants to get out of the picture. He is valueless.<sup>55</sup>

Two echelons below Dr. Mikesell, battalion surgeons had neither the time nor the inclination to contemplate the finer points of neuropsychiatric classification. Dr. (Captain) Slaughter of the 2nd battalion, 37th Infantry Regiment, 25th Division remembers his New Georgia experience:

The percentage of NP cases wasn't very high on New Georgia Island. By the time we arrived on this island we had lost most of our inferior men, if you want to put it that way, through illness and what have you on Guadalcanal. Very few of the men cracked up. We had three or four men in our battalion that broke down and cried and the self-inflicted wounds were probably due to a neuropsychiatric condition. We could not salvage any of them, because we couldn't keep them around for morale reasons. We wouldn't dare keep a fellow who was apt to go off the beam at night, because it was unhealthy to have a fellow start screaming in the middle of the night in your foxhole with you. It was my experience that the worst part of the whole business of jungle fighting was the nights. It was worse than any bullets the Japs shot my way. We had to get in a hole, a little slit trench or foxhole, as dusk was about seven o'clock, and we had to stay there until it became light in the morning which was about seven. Those holes were wet, rocky and cold and it was difficult to sleep. It was a tremendous strain to lay there and not be able to move or make any noise for 12 hours. Anyone who was a little nervous from fatigue or malaria had quite a problem to lie for that length of time. I know we had one fellow who couldn't stand it anymore, and just to have something to do, jumped up and ran to another foxhole containing two men. They almost beat him to death with their bare hands before they found out who he was.<sup>56</sup>

Both Mikesell and Slaughter make their comments in December 1943, a few months after the New Georgia Operation. Although their comments differ by perspective, they both mention salvaging neuropsychiatric casualties and what is required to do that. Noting that one “salvages” *junk*, the litmus test for these doctors is who is effective in combat, who is not, and of those who are not, who can be fixed? Slaughter, closer to the point of the spear, has not the luxury of even a day of treatment, and is hence content that most of the “inferior men” had been sloughed off at Guadalcanal. Mikesell, from his vantage-point at division, has a longer view. He is obviously looking towards the remainder of the war and the many islands between him and Japan. A longer view still is one that does not accept first battle as a weeding out process and seeks to prevent neuropsychiatric casualties, or at a minimum is prepared diagnose and treat them swiftly and correctly when they occur.

Dr. Coleman indicates in *Neuropsychiatry in World War II* that an abundance of psychiatric knowledge is not required to handle pathological battle reactions. Good leadership, and its primary derivative, unit cohesion, however, are indispensable, “expressed through a policy of treatment of the individual casualty, combining personal concern for a disorganized human being with firm medical support to restore his integrity, and allow him to return rapidly to the socially supportive situation of his own unit.”<sup>57</sup>

Previous chapters have discussed the lack of unit cohesion in the 43rd. Colonel Hallam in chapter 1 named several of the factors contributing to this lack of cohesion. It is appropriate to note here, however, that the subtleties resulting in poor cohesion can be difficult to spot indeed. Not until the screening of the 43rd’s neuropsychiatric casualties after the New Georgia operation was it revealed that tension existed between men of the original 43rd, federalized in New England, and those who joined the division enroute to New Georgia.<sup>58</sup> Dr. (Colonel) Albert Glass notes in *Neuropsychiatry in World War II* that the most important contribution of that era of combat psychiatry was the recognition of “the sustaining influence of the small combat group,”

and posits that “the absence or inadequacy of such sustaining influences or their disruption during combat [evacuation] was mainly responsible for psychiatric breakdown in battle.”<sup>59</sup> If anything set the conditions for the 43rd’s inordinate percentage of neuropsychiatric casualties in their first battle, it was their lack of unit cohesion. In the words of an infantry scout wounded at Salerno, “You know the men in your outfit. . . . It’s the main thing that keeps you from going haywire.”<sup>60</sup>

Assuming that a neuropsychiatric casualty is a victim of battle fatigue, and he is not evacuated as a violent psychotic, soldiers in both wars found that the optimum place for him was in the company rear. There he is close enough to his comrades to still feel their presence, if not their affection, until such time as he can rejoin them in the line. Additionally, he is within reach of his unit’s medical personnel and trained psychiatric help if required. If he returns to the fight after a few days, he does not suffer from the merciless judgment his comrades would quickly apply were he evacuated.<sup>61</sup> The further in time and space a soldier is from the fighting line, the more severe is the judgment by his peers. (This concept is revealed outside of the context of neuropsychiatric casualties, in the contempt front-line soldiers reserve for those in noncombat jobs.)<sup>62</sup>

Additionally, a victim of battle fatigue evacuated is, although initially relieved, an isolated and later guilt-ridden figure standing little chance of recovery. William Manchester, wounded on Okinawa, “jumped hospital” against orders and returned to his unit, demonstrating the power of and the need for a soldier to be near his buddies and thus demonstrating the power of unit cohesion. Manchester described the act, thirty-five years later: “It was an act of love. Those men on the line were my family, my home. They were closer to me than I can say, closer than any friends had been or ever would be. They had never let me down, and I couldn’t do it to them. I had to be with them, rather than let them die and me live with the knowledge that I might have saved them. Men, I now knew, do not fight for flag or country, or for the Marine Corps or

glory or any other abstraction. They fight for one another.”<sup>63</sup> Manchester’s account stresses his obligation and duty to his comrades, but there is a subtler message in his words as well, betrayed by the phrase “my family, my home.” The soldier indeed wishes to meet his obligations to his comrades, but he also gains security from them. A wounded veteran of the North African Campaign elaborates: “The fellows don’t want to leave when they’re sick. They’re afraid to leave their own men – the men they know. They don’t want to get put in a different outfit. Your own outfit – they’re the men you have confidence in. It gives you more guts to be with them.”<sup>64</sup>

The Army treats wounded soldiers by echelon. If a soldier cannot handle his wound alone, his buddy helps him. If they require additional help, there is recourse to the platoon medic. If he is unequal to the task the company aid station renders assistance, and so on. Ultimately, the education of World War I and World War II teaches that neuropsychiatric casualties should be treated in exactly the same fashion. The neuropsychiatric casualty must be seen as a casualty rather than a soldier with a character flaw.

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<sup>1</sup>Colonel Hallam graduated from Indiana University Medical School in 1925, and joined the Army Reserves in 1933. By the time he arrived on New Georgia, he had already been a division surgeon (38th Division, January ’41 to March ’42.) While certainly not a unique man, Colonel Hallam was in a small minority of military doctors with long association and experience in the Army. Unlike most draftee doctors, Hallam most likely saw responsibilities beyond the individual patient and the Hippocratic Oath. His actions indicate he felt a strong sense of urgency for the accomplishment of the mission, as well as a sense of responsibility for the 43rd as a unit.

<sup>2</sup>43rd Infantry Division Surgeon’s Journal, 1 November 1942 - 10 May 1943. National Archives file no. 343-26.1, 38.

<sup>3</sup>Eric Hammel, *Munda Trail: The New Georgia Campaign* (New York: Orion Books, 1989), 154.

<sup>4</sup>Colonel William S. Mullins, ed., *Neuropsychiatry in World War II*, vol. 2, *Overseas Theaters* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1973), xv.

<sup>5</sup>Dr. Roger J. Spiller, George C. Marshall Professor of Military History, US Army Command and General Staff College, interview by the author 8 January 1999, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, written notes in possession of the author.

<sup>6</sup>Emanuel Miller, *The Neuroses in War* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1944), 45.

<sup>7</sup>Richard Holmes, *Acts of War: The Behavior of Men in Battle* (New York: The Free Press, 1985), 266.

<sup>8</sup>John Ellis, *Eye Deep in Hell: Trench Warfare in World War I* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 116.

<sup>9</sup>US Army, "Study of Army Ground Forces Battle Casualties" (Washington, DC: Headquarters Army Ground Forces Plans Section, 1946), 3. Report in possession of Dr. Roger J. Spiller, Ft. Leavenworth, KS.

<sup>10</sup>Lucian K. Truscott, Headquarters, Third Infantry Division, "Report on Casualties and Replacements," 17 December 1943. Inclosure 8. Report in possession of Dr. Roger Spiller, Ft. Leavenworth, KS.

<sup>11</sup>Eric T. Dean, Jr., *Shook Over Hell: Post Traumatic Stress, Vietnam, and the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 27.

<sup>12</sup>Dr. H. Crichton Miller, "General Conclusion," in Dr. Emanuel Miller, ed., *The Neuroses in War* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1944), 202.

<sup>13</sup>Captain John W. Appel, "Prevention of Manpower Loss from Psychiatric Disorders; Report of a trip to North African Theater of Operations 17 May-29 July 1944," 22 March 1945, 1. Report in possession of Dr. Roger Spiller, Ft. Leavenworth, KS.

<sup>14</sup>Eric J. Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 167.

<sup>15</sup>John Keegan, *The Face of Battle, A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo and the Somme* (London, England: Penguin Books, 1976), 334-5.

<sup>16</sup>John Glenn Gray, *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 17.

<sup>17</sup>Robert R. Palmer et al., *US Army in World War II: The Army Ground Forces*, vol. 2, *Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1948), 228.

<sup>18</sup>"Study of Army Ground Forces Battle Casualties."

<sup>19</sup>Lord Moran, *The Anatomy of Courage: The Classic Study of a Soldier's Struggle Against Fear* (Garden City Park, New York: Avery Publishing Group, 1987), 61-149.

<sup>20</sup>Mullins, 789.

<sup>21</sup>Colonel Robert S. Anderson, ed., *Neuropsychiatry in World War II*, vol. 1, *Zone of Interior* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1966), 17-18.

<sup>22</sup>Mullins, 459.

<sup>23</sup>Miller, 216.

<sup>24</sup>Samuel Stouffer et al., *Studies in Social Psychology in World War II: The American Soldier*, vol. 2, *Combat and Its Aftermath* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), 198-99.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 461.

<sup>26</sup>“Study of Army Ground Forces Battle Casualties”

<sup>27</sup>US Army, FM 21-100, *Basic Field Manual/Soldier's Handbook* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1941).

<sup>28</sup>US Army, *The ROTC Manual, Infantry* (Harrisburg, PA: The Military Service Publishing Co., 1942).

<sup>29</sup>US Army, *Infantry in Battle*, 2nd Edition, George C. Marshall, ed. (Washington, DC: The Infantry Journal, Inc., 1939), 355-63. (Reprint for the Center of Military History, GPO, 1996, page citation is to the reprint edition).

<sup>30</sup>US Army, Field Manual 100-5, *Field Service Regulations: Operations* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1941; reprint, GPO, 1992), 18 (page citation is to the reprint edition).

<sup>31</sup>Dr. Roger J. Spiller, George C. Marshall Professor of Military History, US Army Command and General Staff College, interview by the author 5 January 1999, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, written notes in possession of the author.

<sup>32</sup>Mullins, 461.

<sup>33</sup>Leed, 174-5.

<sup>34</sup>Mullins, 1060.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 635.

<sup>36</sup>Lieutenant Colonel Hobart Mikesell, 37th Division Surgeon, “Report of Medical Department Activities in New Georgia and Guadalcanal, 7 December 1943,” 10, Combined Arms Research Library, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, file no. C-2368.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup>Lieutenant Colonel Stephen W. Ranson, “The Normal Battle Reaction: It's Relation to the Pathologic Battle Reaction,” (Bulletin of the US Army Medical Department, Washington, DC: November 1949): 3-11.

<sup>39</sup>Stouffer et al., 209. Stouffer surveyed 1,766 combat veterans in rifle and heavy weapons companies in Italy, April 1944.

<sup>40</sup>Martin van Creveld, *Fighting Power: German and US Army Performance, 1939-1945* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), 91. The closest the Germans came was in World War II, when they classified some soldiers as needing the care of a psychiatrist.

<sup>41</sup>Spiller interview, 12 January 1999.

<sup>42</sup>Keegan, 334-5.

<sup>43</sup>Mullins, 990.

<sup>44</sup>Colonel John Lada, ed., *Medical Statistics in World War II* (Washington DC: GPO, 1975), 412.

<sup>45</sup>Eli Ginzberg, *The Ineffective Soldier*, vol. 1, *The Lost Divisions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 36 and 169.

<sup>46</sup>Lewis B. Hershey, *Selective Service in Peacetime* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1942), 214, 415-16.

<sup>47</sup>Eli Ginzberg, *The Ineffective Soldier*, vol. 2, *Breakdown and Recovery* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), xv.

<sup>48</sup>Mullins, 1060.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Colonel Franklin T. Hallams, "Medical Service in the New Georgia Campaign," Office of the XIV Corps Surgeon, 31 October 1943, 31, Combined Arms Research Library, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, file no. N-6946.

<sup>51</sup>Mullins, 1004.

<sup>52</sup>Albert Q. Maisel, *The Wounded Get Back* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1943), 200.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 202.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Mikesell, 9.

<sup>56</sup>Captain C.P. Slaughter, 2nd Battalion Surgeon, 37 Infantry Regiment, 25th Division, "Report of Medical Department Activities in New Georgia and Guadalcanal," 23 December 1943, 5, Combined Arms Research Library, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, file no. N-2368.

<sup>57</sup>Mullins, 638.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 1060-61.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 995.

<sup>60</sup>Stouffer, 136.

<sup>61</sup>Spiller interview 15 October 1998.

<sup>62</sup>Stouffer, 299.

<sup>63</sup>William Manchester, *Goodbye Darkness: A Memoir of the Pacific War* (New York: Dell Publishing Group, 1979), 451.

<sup>64</sup>Stouffer, 143.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

“In the Solomons by early August Army Forces under Halsey had secured New Georgia with its important Munda Airfield.”<sup>1</sup> So reads the operational summary in William A. Stofft’s *American Military History*. Tactical and strategic goals and objectives and the outcomes of battles are often quite this simply summarized. Someone won, someone lost. Ground was gained or lost. So many soldiers died. War can easily become a clinical tally sheet that gives no inkling of what actually occurred. Stofft is of course correct. The 43rd did indeed take Munda Airfield, but perhaps they took it in spite of, not because of the system of which they were a part. This system was a reaction to the regrettable circumstances of the time, circumstances that thrust a war upon an unprepared United States. Busy mass-producing itself, the Army demonstrated poor knowledge regarding neuropsychiatric casualties, unskilled handling of propaganda, poor execution of training, and problems in both senior and junior leadership. The combined result of these deficiencies prevented the 43rd from attaining the degree of cohesion necessary to assist them in combat.

Had the state of training, the image of the enemy, or the quality of leadership been clearer there would have been fewer neuropsychiatric casualties. The most direct cause for the large number of such casualties sustained by the 43rd is, however, ignorance of the proper diagnosis and care of neuropsychiatric casualties. The culturally driven “forgetting” of the lessons of World War I admittedly influences this view. Nevertheless, the infectious nature of neuropsychiatric casualties alone justifies the view that ignorance of their care is both the basic causative as well as the primary precipitating factor of the 1,950 such casualties the 43rd suffered on New Georgia. Had the leadership of the 43rd, including the physicians (who do not generally view themselves as leaders) known the immediate steps to take in such cases the problem would not have gotten out of hand as it did. World War I had taught that soldiers suffering from such a condition must

be handled much as any other casualty. Had this been the case on New Georgia in the 43rd's first two weeks of combat there would not have been the wholesale and immediate evacuations directly out of the combat zone which occurred.<sup>2</sup> A mere recognition of the difference between battle fatigue and clinical mental illness would have meant more combat power conserved and as a result better and faster performance, which in turn would have led to fewer neuropsychiatric casualties. If *shell shock*, *war neurosis*, and *battle fatigue* are infectious, so also is success. The mass mentality or common purpose of a group can be swayed in both directions. Momentum can be controlled and even reversed, as Lieutenant Sportsman demonstrated in stopping his unit from fleeing.

At the time treating neuropsychiatric casualties as other wounded was not within the realm of possibility for the 43rd. Locked in mortal combat with the enemy, the unit defaulted to the position with which it was most culturally comfortable. There was not time for theorizing on the finer points of psychiatric care. Having forgotten what had been learned at so great a price in the Great War, most everyone was convinced that a shaky soldier was a valueless being, most likely a malingerer and quite possibly a coward. Such a soldier must be moved as quickly and as far away from battle as possible. And what relevance did psychiatry offer? How does a hysterical Viennese woman reclining on a couch and listening to the dulcet tones of Freud, as he soothes her sexually repressed anxiety, possibly relate to combat?

Men are most rational, under their own control, and most effective when best informed. Actions born out of ignorance tend to be haphazard, illogical, and often do more harm than good. Free will, and with it choice, all but disappear in cultural ignorance. Education provides options, orderliness, and functionality. When culture suppresses education, there is no progress. The world remains flat rather than round.

Applying this principle to a subject as complicated as neuropsychiatry makes the burying of the advances bought by the butchery of World War I tragic indeed. John Keegan in *The Face*

*of Battle* laments that “any statistics of the proportion of psychiatric casualties to all battle casualties for 1914 to 1918 remain hidden.”<sup>3</sup> Keegan is joined by John Ellis, who in his study of trench warfare in World War I notes that “On shell-shock cases the records are very incomplete, particularly for the years 1915 and 1916. But the Medical History of the War [sic] made the rather smug extrapolation from what figures do exist that total wastage from shell-shock was not much more than two per cent – 80,000 cases. Presumably one either takes comfort from the fact that only one man in fifty could not ‘take it,’ or wonders at a situation where 80,000 men were driven temporarily or permanently insane.”<sup>4</sup> The ignorance of 1915 and 1916 is just that. New circumstances led to new lessons in warfare that by 1918 were well documented in military medical circles and had been witnessed by many of the doughboys who would fight as senior leaders in World War II.

The collective amnesia gripping the military in the opening days of World War II indicates nothing less than a subconscious *will to forget*, or repression, and a refusal to acknowledge that, according to Ellis, “Shell-shock was not something one either had or did not have, like measles or a broken leg. It was an extreme point along a steady progression of emotional torment.”<sup>5</sup> Even if a soldier cracks at his first hearing of artillery ten miles distant, he does so after months of mental anguish, beginning with the arrival of his draft notice or the call of his regiment to arms.

Traditional, culturally driven ignorance remains a strong force. In 1995 the Duke of Edinburgh, commenting on his Second World War experience in the Royal Navy remarked, “We didn’t have counselors rushing around every time somebody let off a gun asking ‘Are you all right?’ ‘Are you sure you don’t have a ghastly problem?’ You just got on with it.”<sup>6</sup> His grace has a point, and no responsible officer would recommend personal counselors for every soldier. But it is difficult to “get on with it” when one’s soldiers are moving away from the sound of the guns.

In addition to the initial ignorance concerning neuropsychiatric casualties, the short-sighted method of employment of propaganda contributed significantly to such casualties. A brave, or courageous, man in battle is not one who is unafraid. Such a man is perhaps stupid or ignorant, perhaps both. A courageous man in battle or in any other extreme situation is one who is able to control his fear. The less fear there is to control, the less energy a man must expend in doing so, and the more energy he can then apply to the task at hand. (Additionally, General Patton expressed a long known truism that "Fatigue makes cowards of us all," further reducing the soldier's energy. The nightmarish conditions of the Pacific, the jungle heat and humidity, diseases, and swamps robbed soldiers of still more of their strength to resist fear.) By depicting the Japanese as jungle dwelling super monkeys, supremely at home in the swamps of New Georgia and possessed of supernatural powers, American propagandists, leaders, and soldiers themselves provided more rather than less grist for the fear-mill. Rumor fed upon rumor, filling the vacuum of useful information in the 43rd soldier's mind until his negative fantasies overcame him and he became a neuropsychiatric casualty.

Real knowledge, vice propaganda, of the enemy considered as an offensive weapon would have perhaps served the 43rd and the American Military as a whole better in World War II, particularly where the Japanese were concerned. Ivan Morris notes in his revealing title *The Nobility of Failure* "In Japan . . . where suicide was integral to the warrior's way of life, there could be no scruples about acts in which soldiers not merely risked themselves in battle but opted for certain death."<sup>7</sup> Western ideology must make a concerted effort to gain understanding of a culture that lionizes sacrifice of life for no possible gain. Once this understanding is gained, however, what a powerful weapon it makes.

Understanding of the enemy culture alone is not enough. One must understand one's own culture as well. In a very real way, Western impatience and offensive actions in the Pacific were perhaps, if not counterproductive, unnecessary. Had the Allies understood themselves, curbed

their own cultural reflexes, and baited those of the Japanese, the Allies could possibly have bled the Japanese dry conducting a largely defensive strategy. Guadalcanal is the perfect example, where wave after wave of Japanese troops threw themselves against American strongholds in suicidal *banzai* charges. If the exigencies of war do not allow such strategy, they certainly do not disallow such tactics at the platoon and company levels. The idea was to kill as many Japanese as possible. What better way than to let them kill themselves? The soldiers of the 43rd learned that the Japanese would come to them in their foxholes at night. They failed, however, to take the next logical step--ambush.

The fundamental misunderstanding of Japanese culture is related by Paul Fussell in *Wartime*, where he notes that "Japanese fighter pilots were said to be padlocked into their cockpits to prevent their escaping by parachute."<sup>8</sup> Nothing could have been further from the truth. Japanese pilots were content to "fall like cherry blossoms in the Spring."<sup>9</sup>

Training, which arguably should include psychological training rather than propagandists' generalizations was also a contributing factor in the problems on New Georgia. The self-diagnosis and self-evacuation of doctors from the island, the officer desertions, the return to Rendova Island from New Georgia of an entire squadron of landing craft, the lack of fire discipline, and the failure to properly entrench at night reflect serious problems in training. One may well argue that these are self-discipline rather than training problems and as such are the responsibility of individuals. Discipline, however, is first approached externally in the setting and enforcement of standards to which the individual learns to adhere, and which he ultimately embraces. This process requires training. Denied by circumstances the opportunity to establish a coherent, consistent, demanding, and *appropriate* training program, the 43rd was unable to achieve the discipline required that would in turn result in yet more effective training, and ultimately success in their initial weeks of combat. Speaking for all such units mass-produced in

the panicky days of the early 1940s, Major General Edward Harding, Commanding General of the 32nd Division (National Guard) in World War II comments, "We were always getting ready to move, on the move, or getting settled after a move. No sooner would we get a systematic training program started than orders for a move came along to interrupt it. You can't set up a realistic training program in a couple of days."<sup>10</sup> General Harding mentions only the moves. His division and many others experienced an almost unfathomable amount of personnel losses and gains, mission changes, equipment shortages and changes, as well as major organizational changes. Training was a "come-as-you-are" affair, often playing second fiddle to deployment to combat. There are indeed some things that can only be learned in combat, which is a cruel and ruthless teacher indeed. The idea of effective training, a relentlessly demanding yet kinder teacher, is that it is as realistic and representative of actual combat conditions as possible.

Training is the purview of leadership, senior and junior, as is to some extent performance in combat. A commanding general ranting and raving in the front lines, offering ribbons and medals for foolish heroism, or harassing soldiers and junior leaders attempting to do their jobs is not helpful. Neither is a sickly, superannuated officer who never shows himself in the front lines and whose idea of effective training extends to the proper position of mop heads. General Hester was of course neither of these caricatures, but if he must be characterized at all it must be in the direction of the latter. At best he perhaps did nothing to harm his division, but there is little evidence that he was there for them in the way he should have been either in training or combat. Accepting the status quo is hardly leadership, and in the end General Hester failed to even live up to General McNair's lukewarm, noncommittal appraisal that he was "Untried, but should do well."<sup>11</sup> General Hester's discharge of his responsibilities as a senior leader stand in sharp contrast with that of Generals Barker and Wing, by all accounts effective, resourceful, and inspirational officers.

Junior leadership is perhaps more responsible for soldier conduct in combat than senior leadership, far removed and concerned with future as well as current operations as the generals and colonels are. Notwithstanding the example of Lieutenant Sportsman and others like him, there seemed to be a significant number of junior leaders in whom the soldiery had little trust or confidence. Unfortunately, soldiers had enough trust in them, however, to follow them when they fled, a proposition admittedly requiring little trust indeed. In this vein, the officer or noncommissioned officer becomes a convenient excuse, a justification for undisciplined actions. An officer or noncommissioned officer can precipitate panic perhaps easier than a private soldier, as it is they who set the standard. If they determine that the appropriate action is to run they will indeed be followed. Sportsman and men of his type, as well as those of the type that fled, represent the extremes only. The 43rd put 12,000 men on New Georgia. Subtracting the almost 2,000 neuropsychiatric casualties, that leaves 10,000 men, hundreds of whom were noncommissioned and junior commissioned officers who, while perhaps not confident enough, not trusting enough in their fellows, their weapons, their leaders, and their training to be aggressive, managed to control their fear and stay the course. Leadership, true enough, is a significant factor in the 43rd's neuropsychiatric casualties, but not, as Colonel Hallam suggests, the first or even most important factor in this particular situation. If leadership is to be taken to task at all for the 43rd's problems on New Georgia, perhaps the officers' greatest failure was hubris--the assumption that they exerted absolute control over their subordinates, to include control over soldiers' instincts. Leaders simply failed to acknowledge that orders and obedience have their limitations.

Circumstances in the early 1940s mitigated against knowledgeable military neuropsychiatry, effective propaganda, appropriate training, and to a lesser extent effective leadership. The unavoidable byproduct of these circumstances and their results

was a lack of cohesion in the 43rd. There is no dearth of literature available on the necessity of cohesion for successful organization, both military and civilian. Although the *Boy Scout Handbook* may refer to this concept as citizenship or community, the church as being thy brother's keeper, and politicians as nonpartisanship, the concept is basically the same.

In "An Investigation into the Value of Unit Cohesion in Peacetime," Frederick Manning and Larry Ingraham note that the first century A.D. General Onasander instructs commanders to place "brothers in rank besides brothers; friends beside friends." Manning and Ingraham also find this theme in British Regulations circa 1800, "Comrades are always to have the same berths in quarters; and that they may be as little separated as possible, in either barracks or the field, will join the same file on parade and go on the same duties with arms."<sup>12</sup> In *Battle Studies*, published in 1904, the French military theorist and officer Ardant du Picq, held that "A wise organization insures that the personnel of combat groups changes as little as possible, so that comrades in peace time maneuvers shall be comrades in war."<sup>13</sup> Perhaps the most convincing sources for the value of unit cohesion are two military theorists and soldiers who could not be farther apart on every issue but this one. Paul Fussell, arguably war's greatest living critic, some may even say cynic, begrudgingly admits in *Wartime* that "men will attack only if young, athletic, credulous, and sustained by some equivalent of the buddy system."<sup>14</sup> Fussell's alter ego, John Glenn Gray, perhaps the most romantic of war's critics notes in *The Warriors* that "Numberless soldiers have died, more or less willingly, not for country or honor or religious faith or for any other abstract good, but because they realized that by fleeing their posts and rescuing themselves, they would expose their companions to greater danger."<sup>15</sup> Both officers and enlisted men reported in 1944 that, second only to getting the job done, the vital factor in combat motivation was the buddy.<sup>16</sup> Willie must have his Joe, as Bill Mauldin's most popular wartime cartoon reflects.<sup>17</sup>

In a perfect world, the men of the 43rd would have trained together with no personnel changes from 24 February 1941 until their mission was complete on New Georgia Island, twenty

months later, and on through the end of the war. The Second World War of course did not allow such conditions for the 43rd. Between 30 June 1940 and 30 June 1941, the Army was increasing in size from 264,118 to 1,455,565 men.<sup>18</sup> The result of this mass production is illustrated in microcosm by this entry from the 43rd G2 Staff Journal during the New Georgia operation, "Lt Jennings saw 2 Japs around his BAR man. He tried to get to his BAR man and was fired on. He got one Jap by the throat but in the meantime was cut off from his platoon *who all stayed in foxholes* [emphasis added]."<sup>19</sup> Threatened by two of the enemy, who largely as a result of poorly managed friendly propaganda were "supermen," an entire platoon, lacking trust in its training, and feeling no particular bond with Lieutenant Jennings or their BAR man, behaved if not predictably, at least understandably.

Unit cohesion is not the answer for victorious units. In itself, cohesion guarantees little, as a 43rd officer, Colonel (retired) Joseph Zimmer, remembering the Munda Trail, so eloquently points out, "I cannot deny the fact that I was on the verge of giving up, but somehow, I just couldn't leave the boys. A hand wound by a piece of shrapnel . . . left me more shaken and with a chance to be evacuated, *but the fact that I was afraid of the trail more than the battalion's precarious position decided my question* [emphasis added]."<sup>20</sup> More wryly and perhaps more to the immediate point, military theorist Major General J. F. C. Fuller notes that "morale does not render [soldiers] bulletproof."<sup>21</sup> Unit cohesion is, however, a powerful motivator and a vaccine of sorts against fear.

In his summary of the New Georgia operation, XIV Corps Commander Major General Oscar W. Griswold notes the damage of neuropsychiatric casualties, and recommends more appropriate preparation for combat:

Nervous men have been known to get scared of each other in the dark, and cut each other up at times with fatal results. . . . Something positive is needed in the way of preparing a new command mentally and psychologically for the jungle (which is an unknown and fearsome thing in itself) and for the Japs. I saw far too much "war neurosis" in certain units here. A man who is beside himself with fear is pathetic and dreadful to see, and the thing is like an infectious disease. Officers are not immune. . . . When mentally prepared

and properly trained, I think a Jap night attack need never be feared by our troops. It's the best way I know of to kill plenty of Japs in a short time. But it is a fearsome thing for untried troops, and almost wrecked one regiment [169th] before it found itself. Our training should take cognizance of this.<sup>22</sup>

The "something positive" for which General Griswold is searching is cultural knowledge of the enemy, which can be viewed as an offensive weapon, and cohesion, which is an equally strong defensive weapon. All soldiers will eventually break down, just as a weapon will eventually run out of ammunition. The trick is to keep the soldier functioning as long as possible and to lead him well while he is fighting. Cohesion, in this sense, is ammunition, or perhaps more appropriately, sandbags for cover against the psychological damage of combat.<sup>23</sup> Had the 43rd been given the opportunity to develop such a cohesive base, their performance in the first weeks of combat on New Georgia may well have been characterized by something other than neuropsychiatric casualties.

The 43rd, as any organization, was more organism than system. As such it responded to threat in the way it thought best to preserve itself. Unhappily its response reinforced the simultaneous individual response for self-preservation. Battle-fatigued soldiers, in need of nothing more than a few hours rest, were evacuated from the battlefield post haste. Some would not return until the battle was over. As a social organism, the small primary groups which made up the 43rd were affected adversely by individual actions, yet lacking cohesion, the groups themselves lost their integrity and became nothing more than individuals as well. These individuals understandably demonstrated diverse rates and levels of combat adaptation.

The individual 43rd soldier never heard of a primary group and "cohesion" to him would have been appropriate engineering jargon. What he knew was this: He had been mobilized to serve for one year, but all that had changed on 7 December 1941, and now he did not know when or if he could return to normal civilian life. He had trained with outdated equipment and tactics in several different small units. He had moved from camp to camp, from island to island, spending most of his time accomplishing the tasks associated with moving rather than training.

He had perhaps never maneuvered with his squad through the jungle at night, nor did he know his fellow squad members very well as they were constantly changing. He had doubts about his leaders who seemed to know little more than he.

He also knew that he faced a wicked enemy, a simian creature supremely at home in the jungle. He knew that the guy in the foxhole next to him was nervous, jumpy, and talked in his sleep. He knew that it was dark, wet, and that the jungle was full of strange noises, any one of which could represent a threat to his life. He knew that he was scared and as he searched for a receptacle for his fear, as he searched for something or someone to replace his fear with confidence, he found little but questions about how his parade ground training applied to the jungle. Neither could he risk sharing his fears with the guy next to him who was seemingly more frightened than he. The soldier also knew that other guys had just walked away from all of this. Why could he not do the same?

This soldier, and millions like him in the World War II American Army, were the product of mass production. He had come off a sterile assembly line as a shiny, newly created "G. I. Joe," complete with a uniform set of immunizations and dog tags. That the name on his dog tags was not Joe was subordinated to the fact that all other Joes had dog tags, just like him. He had been placed together with other Joes, all of whom were of course interchangeable, as evidenced by their replicated haircuts, clothing, and equipment. Unlike Bill Mauldin's Joe, who throughout the war had the same buddy (his comrade and foxhole companion Willie) the real Joe, mass-produced as he had been, was expected to immediately interact with all other mass-produced Joes in perfect harmony. The concept that perhaps a different set of rules were required for Joe than for a tank, while vaguely understood, was forgotten in the race to kill as many Axis soldiers as possible. The "Arsenal of Democracy" was grinding away at full tilt, and if its products, to include Joes, were perhaps not machined quite correctly for battle, no one had time to worry about that, and besides, there were always more Joes on the way. The replacement Joes trained as airplane

mechanics who found themselves in foxholes on New Georgia were there because their status as Joes alone made everything okay.

“When brute force was to be systematically applied only men who could fit into the system without allowance having to be made for them were wanted.”<sup>24</sup> So says C. S. Forester’s fictional World War I general, musing about the best kind of subordinates for warfare. The problem is that men, by definition, require “allowances” if they are to be successful soldiers. They require appropriate training, medical care, and unit cohesion, and they require it on an individual basis, because unlike an oil change for a tank, the character of care required for an individual soldier is unique. While Joe may indeed need an “oil change,” he needs it perhaps sooner but less of it, or of a different grade, than the Joe standing next to him. Two Joes receiving the same bullet wound in the same place from the same gun at the same range will nevertheless have different injuries. So it is with neuropsychiatric casualties, because although Joe may look like all the other Joes, he is not the same.

Humans as societies seem not only to rebel against individual character for men, but also to strive for uniformity in them as a goal. Consider the uniformity of men when they are supposed to look their best. Place them in evening clothes and they all look exactly the same, and woe betide the gentleman in the dinner jacket. The cultural bent for uniformity assumes that if gentlemen’s clothiers can mass-produce tuxedos, then somehow humankind can mass-produce men who when wearing them not only look the same, but are the same. This mindset was even more prevalent in the years before World War II than it is today, yet modern American society still wants its men, and especially its soldiers, to be the same as each other. The questions remain, “How many artillery rounds will it take before a soldier breaks?” or “How long will a soldier last?” Unconsidered are the countless situational variables, and the inquiries concern *a* soldier, not *this* soldier, assuming the questions are asked at all. Despite the doctrine and history

available on the subject of neuropsychiatric casualties, current planning models and estimates scream silence on the subject.

The World War II mass-produced American Army not only failed to “make allowance” for the reality that men are not machines, but in its care of neuropsychiatric casualties ensured that greater allowances would have to be made. By refusing to treat soldiers, not as morally bankrupt, defective machines requiring junking on the salvage heap, but as individuals who perhaps needed slight treatment, close to the battle lines for a few hours, the Army ironically ensured that the number of soldiers discharged for emotional problems equaled the number screened out of service for the same reason (approximately one million in both cases.) Prisoners of their ignorance, unable to discern between a brewing regimental panic and a soldier requiring rest, World War II leaders began the war by simply junking battle-fatigued soldiers as *unfit*. Perhaps this is why Colonel Hallam’s report on the 43rd and New Georgia, while written with a strong sense of urgency, shows little actual surprise. To a man who had perhaps rationalized the conflicting views of officer and physician within himself, the situation on New Georgia in the summer of 1943 was if not predictable, very much understandable. One can almost hear him say: Mass-produce an Army, refuse to accept that men are not machines, place them in combat in a strange place against an enemy with mythical powers, banish those who show fear from the line or allow them to walk away themselves, and your offensive will grind to a halt, and you, as a unit, will become combat ineffective. What did you expect? How profoundly sad and ironic that twenty-five years before, another military doctor, W. H. R Rivers, describing the exact same situation in the mass-produced British Army of World War I, commented: “Small wonder that the failures of adaptation should have been so numerous and so severe.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>William A. Stofft, ed., *American Military History* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1989), 509.

<sup>2</sup>Colonel Franklin T. Hallam, “Report on Medical Service in the New Georgia Campaign.” Office of the XIV Corps Surgeon, 31 October 1943, 31-32, Combined Arms Research Library, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, file no. N-6946.

<sup>3</sup>John Keegan, *The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo, and The Somme* (London, England: Penguin Books, 1976), 334.

<sup>4</sup>John Ellis, *Eye-Deep in Hell: Trench Warfare in World War I* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, 1989), 118.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>6</sup>Anthony Babington, *Shell Shock: A History of the Changing Attitudes to War Neurosis* (London, England: Leo Cooper, 1997), 178.

<sup>7</sup>Ivan Morris, *The Nobility of Failure: Tragic Heroes in the History of Japan* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975), 327.

<sup>8</sup>Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1989), 47.

<sup>9</sup>Morris, 276.

<sup>10</sup>Eric Bergerud, *Touched With Fire: The Land War in the South Pacific* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 211-12.

<sup>11</sup>Lieutenant General Leslie J. McNair to General Marshall, "High Commanders," memo, 7 October 1941, Box 76, Folder 31, Correspondence, George Catlett Marshall Library, Virginia Military Institute.

<sup>12</sup>Gregory Belenky, ed., *Contemporary Studies in Combat Psychiatry* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1987), 47.

<sup>13</sup>Ardant du Picq, *Leadership: Quotations from the Military Tradition*, ed., Robert A. Fitton, (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1990), 41.

<sup>14</sup>Fussell, 4.

<sup>15</sup>John Glenn Gray, *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), 40.

<sup>16</sup>Samuel Stouffer et al., *Studies in Social Psychology in World War II: The American Soldier*, vol. 2, *Combat and Its Aftermath* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), 109-10.

<sup>17</sup>Francis D. Steckel, "Morale and Men: A Study of the American Soldier in World War II" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1990), 301. Steckel quotes Mauldin in this passage, "The main thing about Willie and Joe was that I always felt that they were like two cops operating together as partners. They don't particularly like each other. They aren't cut from the same cloth. They don't have the same friends. But they're damn good at what they do together, and each is the other guy's life insurance policy. They're not devoted to each other, but they need each other. And that makes for a damn good relationship."

<sup>18</sup>Marvin A. Kreidberg and Merton G. Henry. Department of the Army Pamphlet 20-212, *History of Military Mobilization in the United States Army, 1775-1945* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1955), 581.

<sup>19</sup>43rd Infantry Division, G-2 Staff Journal, Munda Campaign, 29 June to 22 August 1943, 42. National Archives file number 343.07.

<sup>20</sup>Robert J. Conrad, "169th Infantry Regiment in World War II," *The Connecticut Historical Society Bulletin* 60, nos. 1-2 (Winter-Spring 1995): 20.

<sup>21</sup>Colonel T. N. Dupuy, *Understanding Defeat, How to Recover from Loss in Battle to Gain Victory in War* (New York: Paragon House, 1990), 54.

<sup>22</sup>Major General Oscar W. Griswold to Lieutenant General Leslie J. McNair, 29 August 1943, Combined Arms Research Library, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, (microfilm).

<sup>23</sup>Anthony Kellett, "Combat Motivation," in *Contemporary Studies in Combat Psychiatry*, ed., Gregory Belenky (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1987), 227-8.

<sup>24</sup>C. S. Forester, *The General* (Baltimore, MD: The Nautical and Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1982), 205.

<sup>25</sup>Dr. W. H. R. Rivers, "The Repression of War Experience," *The Lancet*, 1, (February 1918): 173.

The 43rd Infantry Division Organization

(At the time of the New Georgia Operation)

Infantry Regiments:

103rd  
169th  
172nd

Division Artillery Battalions:

103rd (105mm Howitzer-Towed)  
152nd (105mm Howitzer-Towed)  
169th (105mm Howitzer-Towed)  
192nd (155mm Howitzer-Towed)

Additional Units:

43rd Reconnaissance Troop (Mechanized)  
118th Combat Engineer Battalion  
118th Medical Battalion  
43rd Signal Company  
43rd Quartermaster Company  
743rd Light Maintenance Company  
Military Police Platoon  
Headquarters Company

Figure 1. The 43rd Infantry Division Organization. Source: *Order of Battle of the United States Army Ground Forces in World War II: Pacific Theater of Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1959), 588.

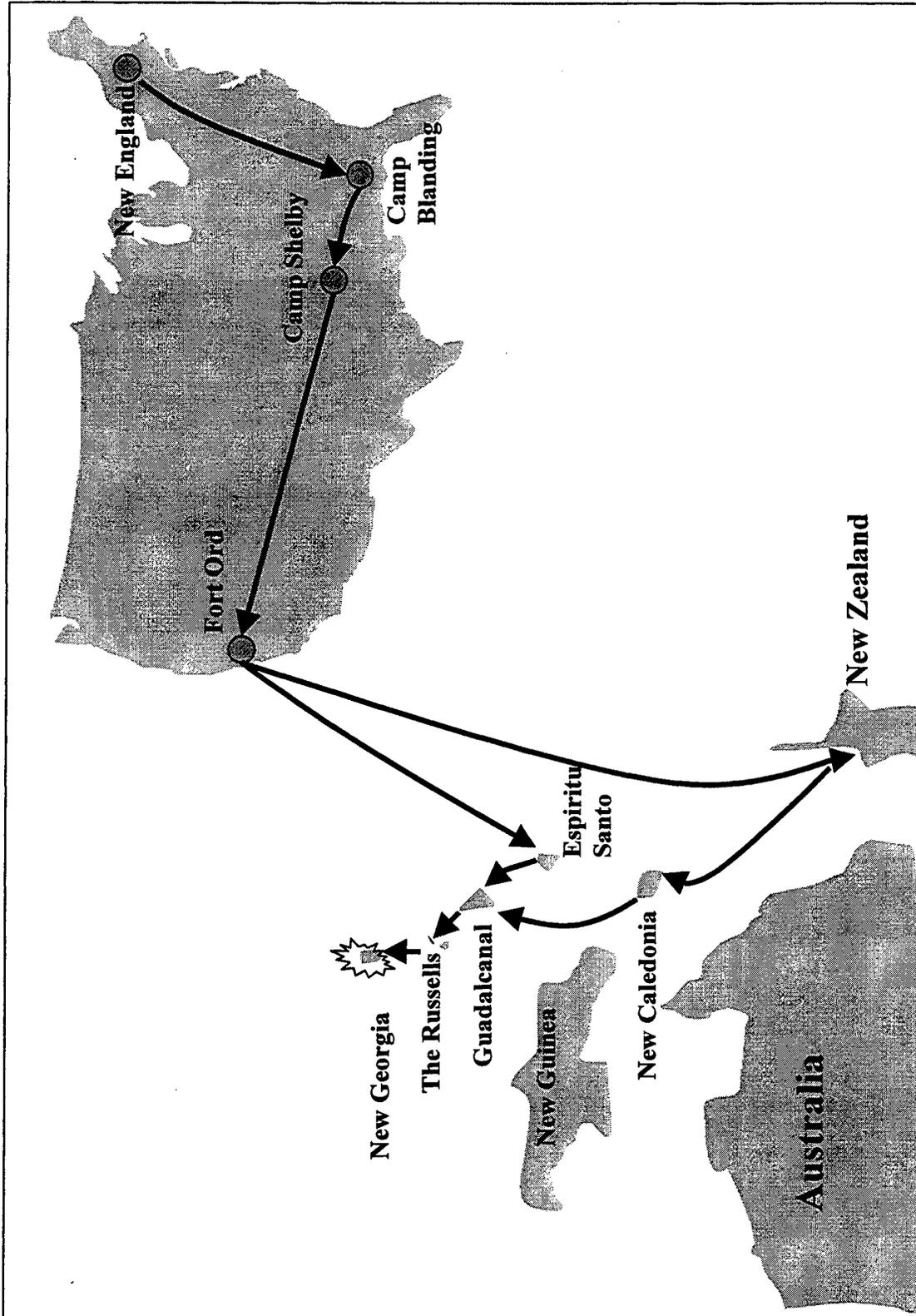
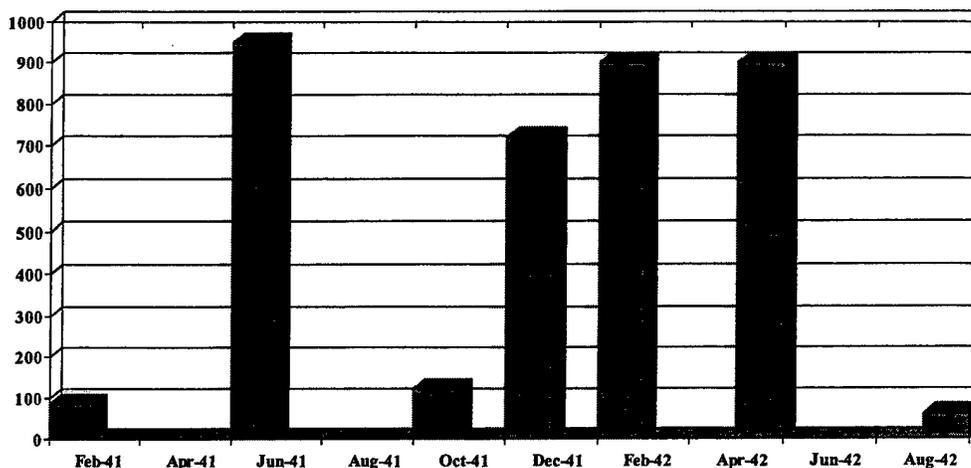


Figure 2. The Odyssey of the 43rd Infantry Division, 24 February 1941-23 September 1943. Source: *Winged Victory: 43rd Infantry Division, 1941-1945*, 20-21.

**Personnel Losses and Gains 169th IN Reg't, 43rd IN DIV, FEB 1940-SEP 1942**



1. Federalized 24 February 1941: Eighty-seven enlisted men discharged for physical and other reasons.
  2. 17-28 June 1941: While at Camp Blanding, the 169th received 950 Selective Service fillers.
  3. 23 October 1941: 123 men over 28 years of age inactivated. All were recalled after Pearl Harbor, but only seventy-six were reassigned to the 169th.
  4. 11 December 1941: 22 officers and 700 enlisted men were transferred to the 102nd Infantry Regiment (The 102nd was the Infantry Regiment lost when the 43rd converted from a square to a triangle division. The 102nd departed immediately for duties on Bora Bora, Canton, and Christmas Islands).
  5. 21 February 1942: While at Camp Shelby, the 169th received 900 *untrained* recruits for basic training. The regimental commander has to for his 1st battalion into a basic training unit for these recruits.
  6. 22 May 1942: 900 additional *untrained* recruits assigned to the 169th.
  7. 19 August 1942: 169th receives a new commander, Colonel John D. Eason.
  8. Last week of September, 1942: While at Fort Ord, sixty-two new second lieutenants assigned to the 169th.
- Note: This chart does not reflect the additional 100 enlisted men sent to Officer Candidate School to serve elsewhere, and the 1500 enlisted men who were transferred to other units between February 1941 and September 1942.

Figure 3. Personnel Losses and Gains in the 169th Infantry Regiment, 43rd Infantry Division, from February 1940-September 1942. Source: Colonel (retired) John J. Higgins, "First Connecticut," unpublished manuscript, 1 March 1963, 12-15. The 169th can trace its history to 11 October 1739, when it was brought into being by His Majesty's General Assembly in Connecticut. Shortly thereafter the 169th saw its first action in the French and Indian Wars.

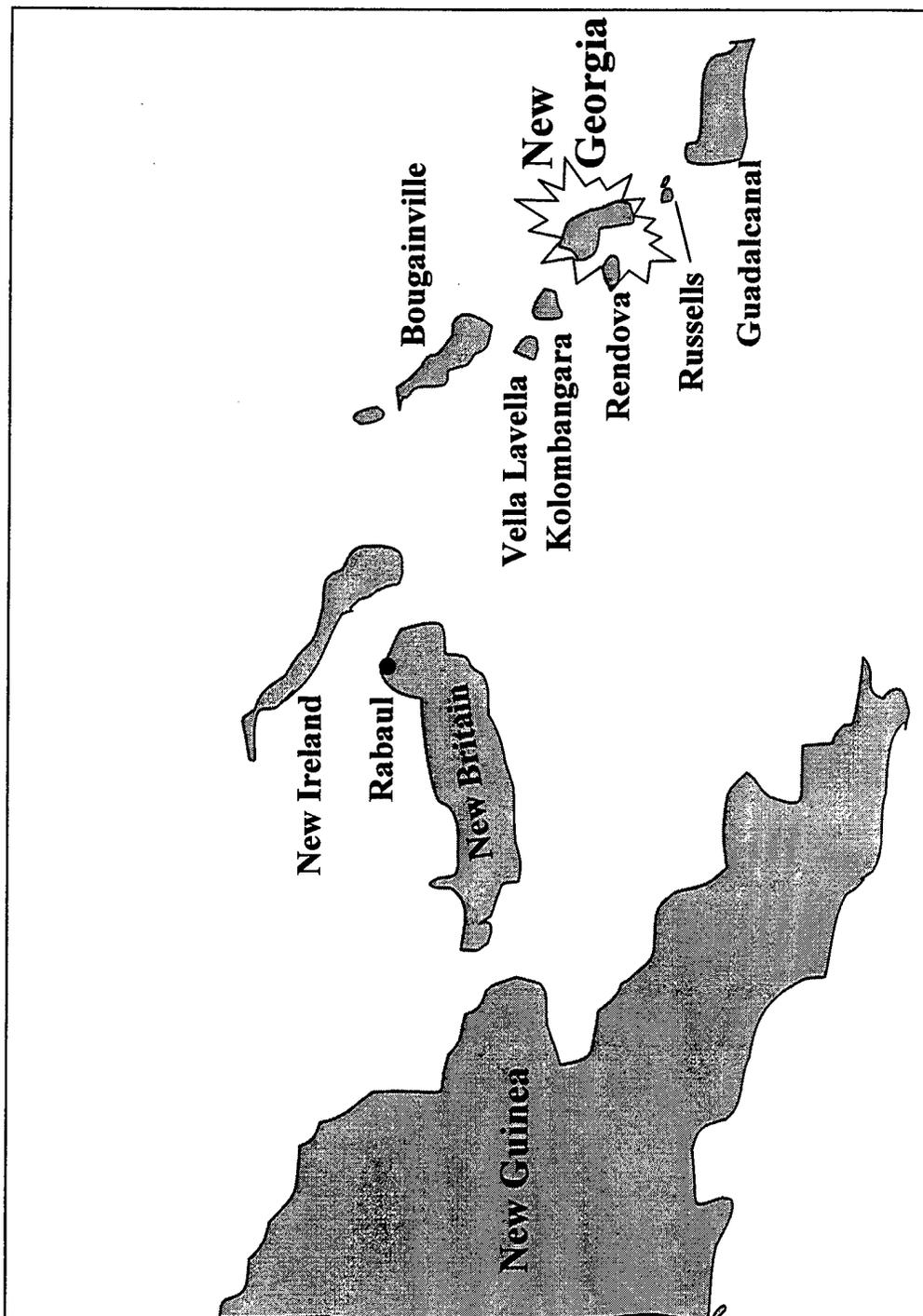


Figure 4. The CARTWHEEL Area. Source: John Miller, Jr., *U. S. Army in World War II: The Pacific War*, vol. 8, *CARTWHEEL, The Reduction of Rabaul* (Washington, DC: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1959), 23.

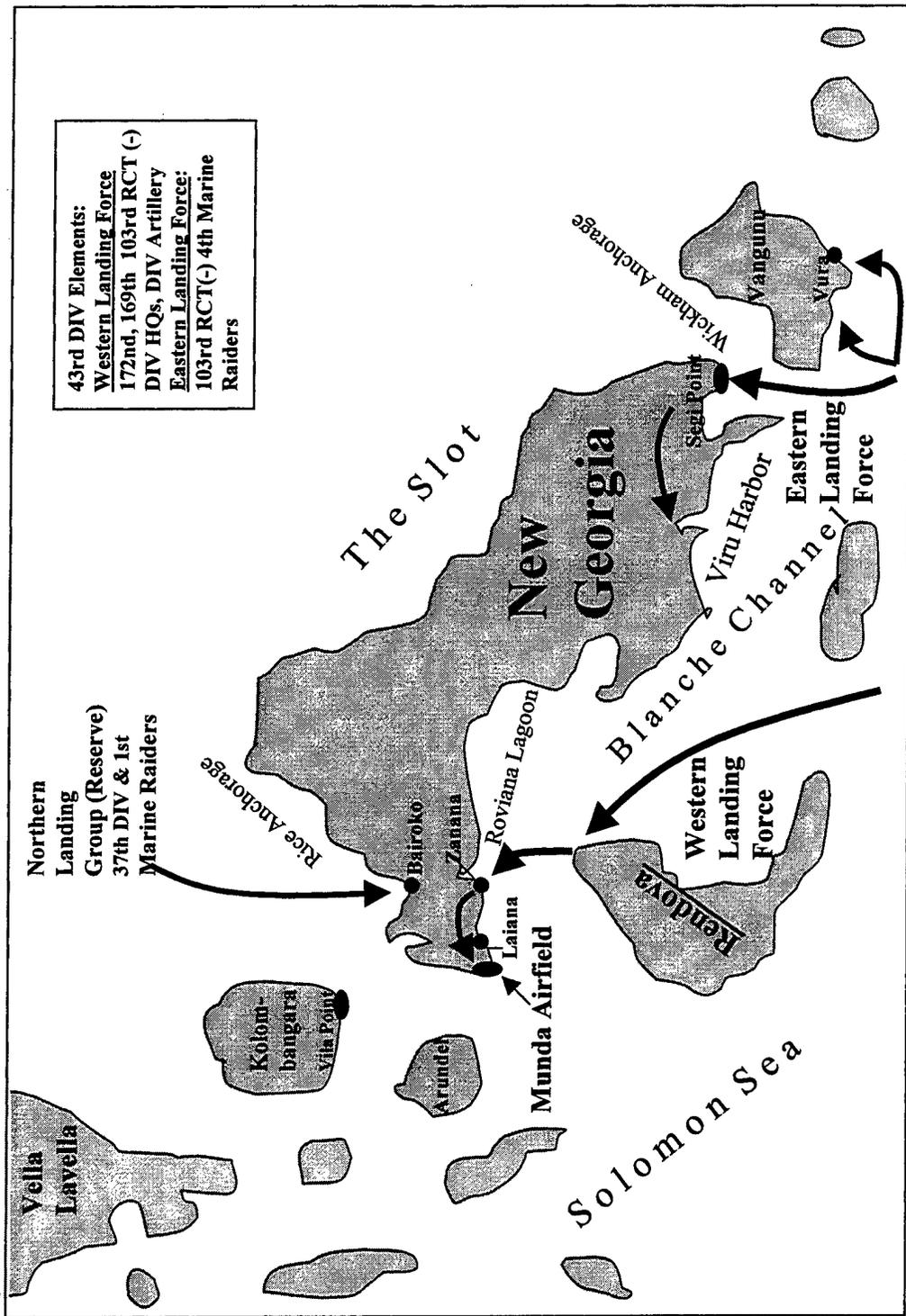
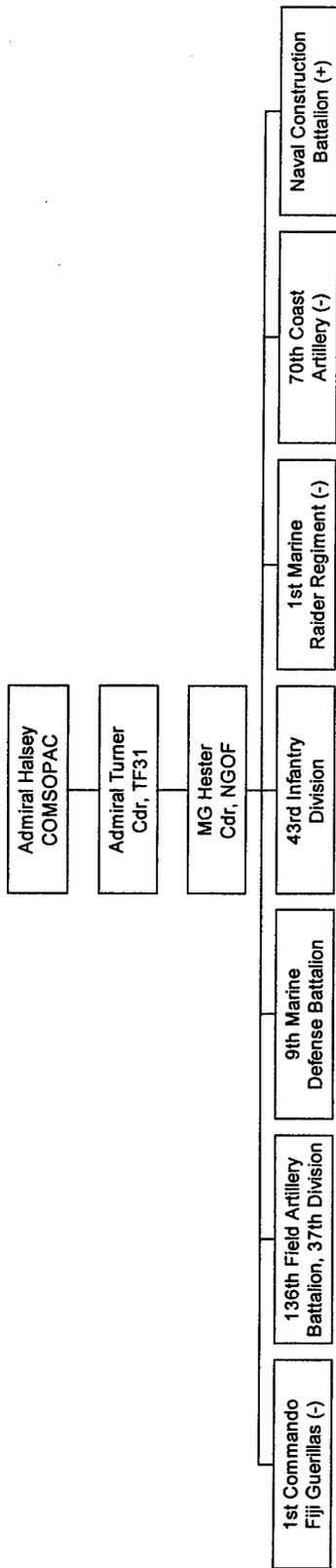


Figure 5. The TOENAILS Area. Source: John Miller, Jr., *CARTWHEEL: The Reduction of Rabaul* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1959), 68.



Note: Original organization only. Additional units were added throughout the operation.

Figure 6. The New Georgia Occupation Force (NGOF) Task Organization. Source: John Miller, Jr., *CARTWHEEL: The Reduction of Rabaul*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1959), 78.

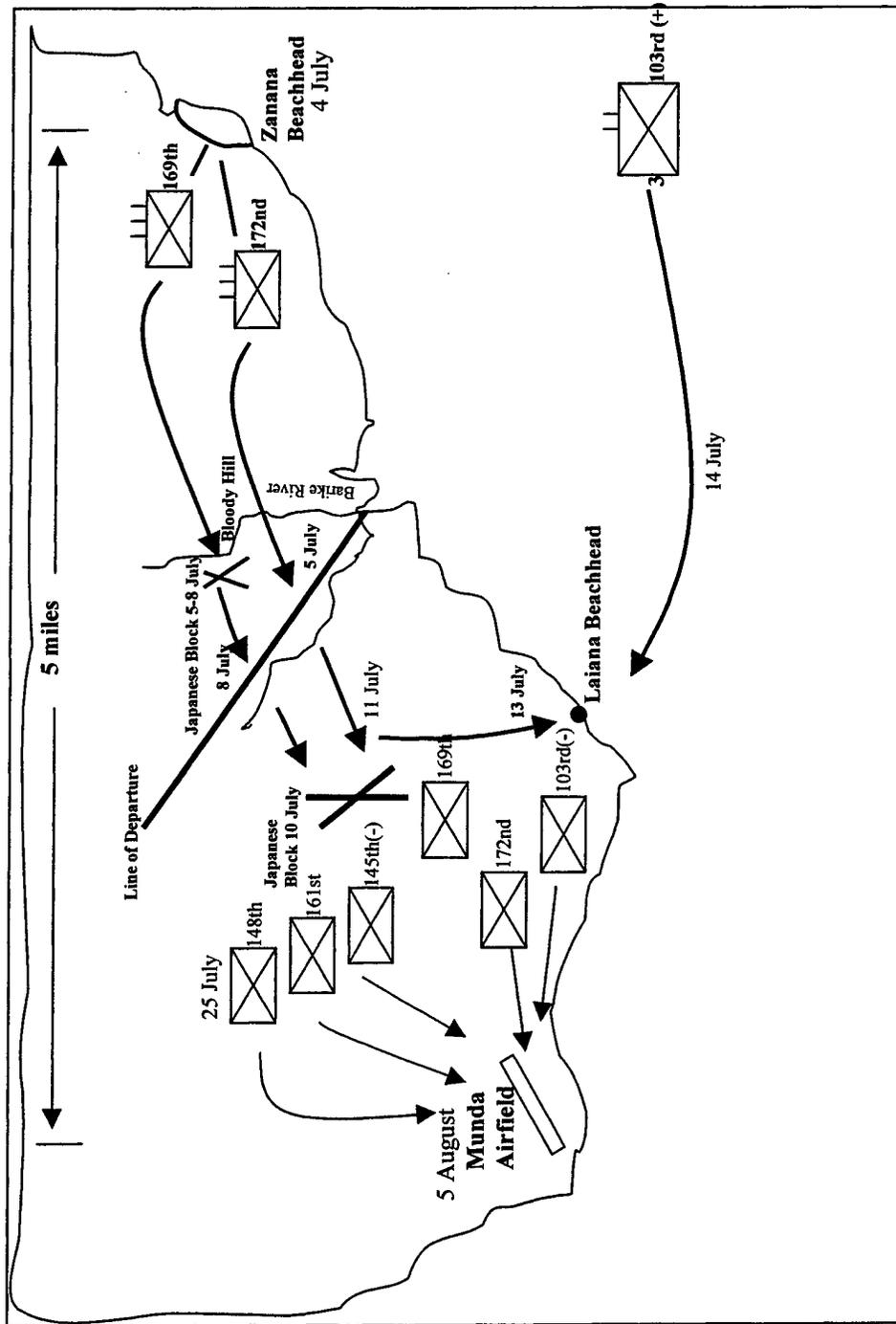


Figure 7. The Drive on Munda Airfield. Source: Eric Hammel, *Munda Trail* (New York: Orion Books, 1989), 80-81.

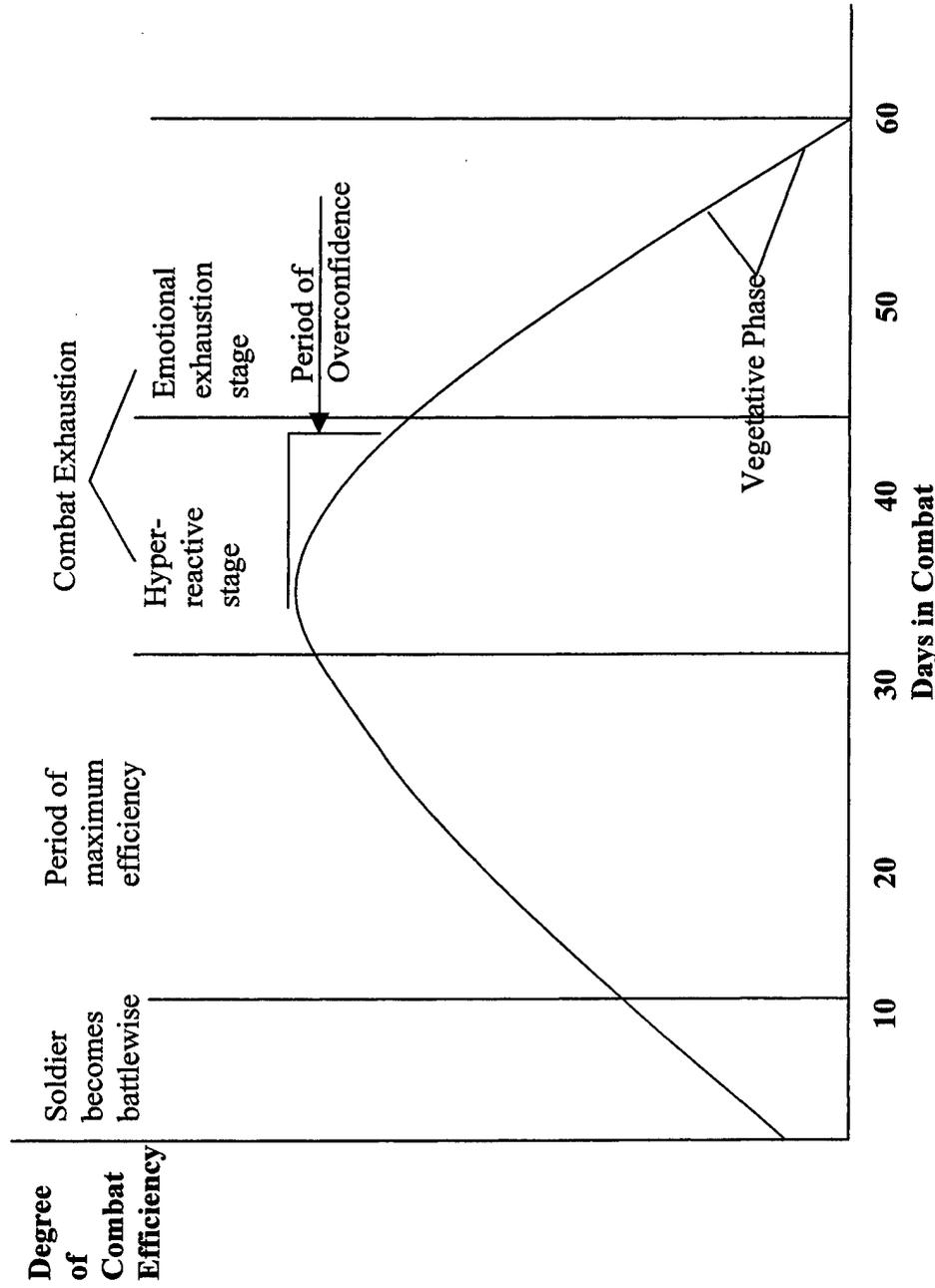


Figure 8. Combat Efficiency Chart. Source: Dr. Roy L. Swank and Dr. Walter E. Marchand, "Combat Neurosis," *Archives of Neurology and Psychology*, vol. 55, 1946, 238.

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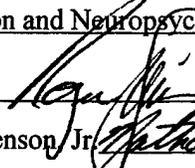
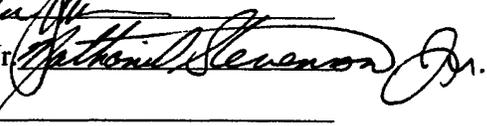
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